

**“Beneficial but not Essential”:  
A Study on British Politics Students’ Attitudes  
Towards Multilingualism and Different Languages**

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## DUPONT, CLOTILDE: “Beneficial but not Essential”: A Study on British Politics Students’ Attitudes Towards Multilingualism and Different Languages

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Tässä pro gradu -tutkielmassa käsitellään politiikanopiskelijoiden kieliasenteita Yhdistyneessä kuningaskunnassa. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää, millaisia asenteita englantilaisilla opiskelijoilla on eri kieliä, kielten puhujia ja kielten oppimista kohtaan. Lisäksi tarkastelun kohteena oli sukupuolen vaikutus asenteisiin.

Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin verkkokyselyn avulla vuoden 2017 aikana. Kysely lähetettiin kolmessa erässä satunnaisesti valikoitujen englantilaisten yliopistojen politiikan laitoksille, jotka puolestaan välittivät kyselyn opiskelijoilleen. Vastauksia tuli lopulta kuudesta yliopistosta eri puolilta Englantia. Tutkimukseen osallistuneiden syntyperäisten englanninpuhujien (N=90) ikä vaihteli 18:sta 55:een vuoteen, joskin valtaosa (90%) oli 18–22 -vuotiaita. Sukupuolijakauma oli tasainen.

Kysely koostui taustatieto-osion lisäksi kolmesta eri tehtävätyypistä. Näistä ensimmäinen oli lauseentäydennystehtävä. Lauseet olivat muotoa ”Kaunein kieli on \_\_\_\_\_”, jossa kieltä määrittävä adjektiivi vaihtui. Toinen tehtävä sisälsi väittämiä, kuten ”Englanti on hyödyllinen työkalu kansainvälisessä viestinnässä”, joita tuli arvioida asteikolla yhdestä viiteen (1 = täysin eri mieltä ja 5 = täysin samaa mieltä). Kolmas osio taas koostui avoimista kysymyksistä, muun muassa liittyen Ison-Britannian EU-eron eli brexitin vaikutukseen vieraiden kielten oppimiseen.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että britit pitävät vieraiden kielten oppimista hyödyllisenä niin töiden, opiskelujen kuin vapaa-ajan kannalta. Lähes kaikilla osallistujilla oli positiivinen suhtautuminen vieraisiin kieliin. Sukupuolen ja asenteiden välillä ei ollut merkittävää korrelaatiota. Yksittäisistä kielistä positiivisimmat määreet (esim. kaunein, rikkain) saivat italia, espanja, ranska sekä osallistujien äidinkieli englanti, kun taas esimerkiksi venäjää ja saksaa pidettiin rumimpina ja vakavimpina kielinä.

Vaikka opiskelijat selkeästi arvostivat monikielisyyttä, kielitaidon ei ajateltu olevan varsinaisesti tarpeen töissä ja opiskeluissa. Tulokset myötäilevät osittain aiempia tutkimuksia: moni syntyperäinen englanninpuhuja uskoo pärjäävänsä pelkällä englannilla. Englannin kielen *lingua franca* -asema koettiin hyödylliseksi, mutta se vaikutti usealla opiskelijalla myös haittatekijänä kieliasenteiden näkökulmasta. Englannin globaali status oli monelle itsestäänselvyys, ja kielitaidon merkitystä kansainvälisissä suhteissa ei aina nähty. Osalla oli myös yksinkertainen käsitys kielten työelämärelevanssista, sillä kielitaitoa pidettiin hyödyllisenä lähinnä ulkomailla työskennellessä.

Yhdistyneen kuningaskunnan koulutusreformien ja EU-eroprosessin myötä aihe on erityisen ajankohtainen. Brittien, mutta myös muiden kansojen kieliasenteita olisi suotavaa tutkia lisää niin kielipolitiikan, kansainvälisten suhteiden kuin kieltenoppimisen näkökulmasta.

Avainsanat: kieliasenteet, *lingua franca*, monikielisyys, Yhdistynyt kuningaskunta

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## 1. Introduction

Multilingualism and foreign language learning have been a major focus of attention in the United Kingdom over the past few years. Various newspapers and academic studies have expressed their concern on the fact that the British lack knowledge of foreign languages and motivation to study them (Peel 2001). For instance, in 2014, a survey on language attitudes among British youth showed that being born a native English speaker may be more of a curse than a blessing: for 39%, the downside of learning a foreign language was that “most people speak English”, while 14% argued that “most other languages are not useful” (Young 2014). These kinds of beliefs may be viewed as a hindrance to language learning and consequently, international communication, as language is first and foremost a means of communication between people. Language attitudes hence affect both the educational and political sphere.

The present study aims to explore the language attitudes held by students of politics in English universities. British students were chosen as the target group of the study because of recent political change (namely the Brexit process), the extent of monolingualism in the UK as compared to most other countries in the world, and the exceptional role of English as an international language. Indeed, one could argue that now more than ever Brits may survive without knowledge of foreign languages, as they will no longer depend on the European Union and as English is today's uncontested lingua franca. Others, including many linguists, argue that the United Kingdom's lack of knowledge of foreign languages and negative attitudes towards them is a threat to themselves both as individuals and as a nation in a globalised world, since multilingualism offers potential to a wide range of benefits – cognitive, social, communicative, and vocational (Ellis 2006). Moreover, the UK's language skills shortage was calculated to cost approximately 3.5% of GDP in 2016 (“Brexit and Languages”, British Council 2016).

Research on language attitudes in the United Kingdom has traditionally focused either on different regional or social varieties of English, territorial languages, such as Welsh or Scottish Gaelic, or attitudes of and towards migrant communities, e.g. the Indian minority. There is clearly a gap in the literature as concerns attitudes towards non-territorial languages, especially among higher education students. Therefore, I focused my study on British university students and aimed to explore their attitudes towards different languages and multilingualism in general. Furthermore, the target group was narrowed down to students of politics, because they would supposedly be more engaged in societal matters and realise the importance of languages at a national and international level due to their subject of study. My hypothesis was that politics students would understand that languages may play a considerable role in their future careers. For instance, the British Academy has stated that foreign languages have “strategic importance” for diplomacy, national security and defence, and even more so today because of the extent of global interconnectedness between nations and multinational organisations (“Lost for Words: The Need For Languages In UK Diplomacy And Security”, British Academy 2013).

The present study was conducted by means of an online questionnaire which was sent to the politics and international relations departments of several English universities. By varying close-ended and open-ended questions, the questionnaire was expected to convey both quantitative and qualitative information on the participants’ language attitudes. My MA thesis is based on the following research questions:

1. What kinds of attitudes do British students of politics display towards different languages, including their native language, and multilingualism?
2. Is there a correlation between the participants’ gender and attitudes? If so, what kind of correlation?

These questions will be answered by examining students’ responses to different attitudinal and motivational tasks and by comparing the answers of female and male participants for each questionnaire item.

I argue that this study has multidisciplinary relevance, as it combines the fields of (socio)linguistics, education, and politics, and may hence provide interesting data for study questions related to all these disciplines. Even though the results of this study cannot be generalised due to a relatively small number of responses, they contribute to the important study of language attitudes and may be of use for future research on language learning and teaching, language policies, and international relations.

## **2. Languages in the UK and the world**

Before discussing the language attitudes of British university students, some background information and contextualisation is needed. The following section will examine broader linguistic concepts, namely the concepts of ‘multilingualism’ and *lingua franca*, which are essential to the present study. In addition, I will discuss languages specifically in the United Kingdom: what languages are spoken in the UK and how language teaching is organised in its four countries.

Because the starting point of this thesis is to explore attitudes towards different languages and multilingualism, I will firstly introduce the central notions of multilingualism and monolingualism in subsection 2.1. I will then move on to examine the British school system country by country, with focus on how languages are taught in England, which is the milieu of the present study (2.2.). The current linguistic and political situation in the UK will be discussed in particular in connection to the European Union (2.3.), given that the UK remains a member state despite having started negotiations to withdraw. These background factors may arguably have an influence on the participants’ responses and help contextualise them. Finally, a subsection will focus on the status of English as a *lingua franca* or international language and the implications hereof (2.4.), as it has been claimed to be closely linked to native English speakers’ language attitudes.

## 2.1. Multilingualism vs. monolingualism

To begin with, let us have a look at two major linguistic phenomena, multilingualism and monolingualism, which are often viewed as opposite terms – knowing several languages as opposed to only knowing one language. The literature on mono- and multilingualism may be regarded as rather biased, as most of it focuses on bi- and multilingualism, whereas monolingualism is scarcely mentioned.

The concept of multilingualism is a difficult one to define, because knowledge of languages can be represented as a continuum, where knowledge of only one language is at one end and native-like proficiency in two or more languages at the other end. Edwards (1994, 55) makes the bold claim that everybody is bilingual, as everybody knows at least a few words in a foreign language. For example, an English speaker may say *bon appétit* without being able to order a croissant in French, or a Finnish speaker may understand the meaning of the sentence *vamos a la playa* without being able to introduce themselves in Spanish. The question of bi- and multilingualism is therefore one of degree, which many researchers have attempted to describe. Early definitions of bilingualism tended to be rather restrictive. For example, Bloomfield (1933, as stated in Edwards 1994, 56) suggested that bilingualism is the possession of a perfectly learned foreign language in addition to one's "undiminished" native language, meaning that competence in the mother tongue is not affected negatively by the additional language. As a general rule, contemporary definitions of bilingualism are more liberal and do not usually expect equal mastery of two languages (Edwards, *ibid.*).

For the purposes of the present study, I will use the definition provided by Ellis (2006, 176), according to which multilingualism is the mental state of an individual who can utilise more than one linguistic code for social communication. From this follows that monolingualism is the state of mind of an individual who has access to only one linguistic code as a means of social communication (*ibid.*). I will also regard bilingualism (knowledge of two languages) as a



subcategory of multilingualism (knowledge of various languages), and refer to both with the umbrella term ‘multilingualism’.

The reason why multilingualism and monolingualism are included in the theoretical background of this study is that beliefs about these phenomena affect language attitudes. For example, if one thinks that most people are monolingual in English, one’s attitude towards other languages may be influenced negatively – learning foreign languages may be seen as a waste of time and effort. It is not uncommon to come across a monolingual speaker who wonders why they should learn another language when “everyone” knows theirs.

Despite the widespread belief that English is enough, the overwhelming majority of the world’s population is multilingual. While the exact number of multilinguals is impossible to record because of the different definitions of the term, various linguists have claimed that bi- and multilinguals clearly outnumber monolingual speakers (Baker & Prys-Jones 1998; Hamers & Blanc 2000; Crystal 1987; Dewaele et al. 2003, cited in Ellis 2006, 174). Yet, as Ellis (2006) insists, it is worth pointing out that monolingualism is rarely studied, and whenever it is mentioned, it is treated as if it was an “unmarked case”, whereas bi- and multilingualism are treated as “exceptions”. This is also the belief held by many monolingual speakers of English: their language is the “norm” to which speakers of other languages should conform (ibid.).

While multilingualism has been spreading all over the world, English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States have tended to stay vastly monolingual. Even though Spanish is gaining ground in the USA, a little over three quarters of the population only spoke English at home according to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). Similarly, in the UK, while immigration has made the country more linguistically diverse, 61% of the British informants to a 2012 EU survey claimed they were not able to have a conversation in any foreign language (“Europeans and their Languages”, 2012). The fact is that, worldwide, more and more people speak at least two languages. According to Varcasia (2011, 7-8),

a number of reasons, including economic globalisation and promotion of minority languages, have contributed to this phenomenon. In an increasingly multilingual world, it is desirable to compete and co-operate successfully between different nations. The UK is therefore likely to profit from addressing its language skills shortage.

## **2.2. The linguistic situation in the UK**

In spite of the monolingual myth surrounding the UK, English is certainly not the only language spoken in the country. There are various minority languages worth mentioning. First of all, the four nations that form the United Kingdom – England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland – all have recognised territorial languages – Cornish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, and Irish, even though English is generally the people's first language in each of them (Ager 2003, 17, 33). In addition, the UK is home to a considerable number of linguistic minorities speaking non-territorial languages, such as Arabic, Punjabi, and Polish. The latter was in fact the second most spoken language in England and Wales in 2011, with a total of 546,000 Polish speakers (Booth 2013). Nevertheless, even in these different migrant communities, non-territorial languages are usually spoken alongside English (ibid., 34).

When it comes to foreign language skills, the United Kingdom has been considered one of the lowest-performing countries in Europe. Despite the European Commission's keenness to promote linguistic diversity, such as their 2002 multilingualism policy that each European citizen should become proficient in at least two languages other than their mother tongue (European Commission 2017), English is favoured across Europe and not least in its homeland, Great Britain. According to Busse and Walter (2013, 435-6), a major part of the British population are monolingual and the majority of Brits do not acquire working proficiency in another European language. Indeed, in 2001, Britain ranked last in the European Union for skills in foreign languages (Peel 2001, 13). Peel (ibid.) considers this a problem in a continent full of competent polyglots, as

lack of linguistic competence hinders intercultural understanding. It may be more difficult to comprehend and appreciate different peoples through one language only. Monolinguals may also be left out from important conversations in languages they do not speak, and they may have more difficulties to comprehend non-native accents of their own language. Furthermore, multilingualism is often required or seen as an advantage in different work or study settings nowadays. Peel (2001, 14) underlines that foreign languages should not be seen as a mere technical skill but as the basis for understanding both foreign cultures and one's own culture.

What is interesting at present is to see whether the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union (Brexit) will affect the UK's will to learn foreign languages. Because of the outcome of the Brexit referendum, it has been speculated that the English language might become less important or even lose its official status in the EU (Modiano 2017). This might eventually be the case if relations between Britain and the EU remain tense. An example of the EU's aversion to English is that, in May 2017, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker chose to address his Venetian audience in French because, he said, "slowly but surely, English is losing importance in Europe" (Watts 2017).

The possible effects of Brexit on languages used in the European Union have been contemplated by several researchers, including Modiano (2017). As a consequence of the Brexit referendum outcome, it has been put forward that English might lose its status as one of the three working languages of the EU and be replaced with French or German (ibid., 316). This may arguably happen because Malta and Ireland originally named Maltese and Gaelic as their respective official languages when the UK declared English as theirs. Consequently, when the UK leaves the EU, English would not be the official language of any member country (ibid.). However, there are practical problems in changing the main language of communication of the EU. English has been the leading working language ever since 2004, when a number of eastern European countries joined the union. Knowledge of French or German is not strong enough in the majority of EU member

countries. It would take a long time to have people learn French and German well enough to use it as the first working language. In fact, despite the difficult political situation between the EU institutions and the UK, Modiano (2017, 325) suggests that the opposite might happen: the status of English could become stronger within the EU because the majority of its native speakers are gone. As concerns education, it is highly unlikely that English loses its place as the number one foreign language to be taught in Europe any time soon, as it is a crucial tool for worldwide communication. What Modiano (*ibid.*) does see as likely is that so-called Euro-English develops into a variety of its own right. When English is used exclusively among non-native speakers, a new, European variety of English may well emerge and develop to the point to be a codified and accepted variant of the language.

Whether English remains an official language in the EU or not, major British institutions are still worried about the state of foreign language learning in the UK and have expressed their wish to improve on it. On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2016, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages published “Brexit & Languages”, a document advising the Government to make sure that Brexit negotiations support the country’s “urgent strategic need for language skills, if the UK is to succeed as a world leader in free trade and international relations” (British Council 2016). According to the British Council (*ibid.*), these questions should be given an even higher priority than in 2013-14 when the report “Languages for the Future” suggested critically low levels of competence in the ten most important languages for the UK’s future, including Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and French.

More recently, the British Council (“Languages for the Future”, 2017) ranked the following languages as the most crucial ones for the UK’s success in the upcoming years, as regards wealth, security, and global influence:

1. Spanish
2. Mandarin
3. French
4. Arabic
5. German
6. Italian

7. Dutch
8. Portuguese
9. Japanese
10. Russian

The Council affirms that the top 5 includes the same languages as those mentioned in their 2013 report, which may indicate that these languages will be important for quite a while. The languages were selected, among other factors, based on the needs of trade and UK business, diplomatic and security priorities, general language interests, and tourism. Interestingly, the ranking also took into account the levels of English proficiency in foreign countries, which suggests, contrary to popular belief, that English is not spoken by ‘everyone’ abroad, or not well enough to secure the UK’s future.

### **2.3. Language learning and teaching in the UK**

In this section, I will briefly discuss the British school system from the point of view of foreign language education. Language learning and teaching in the United Kingdom will be discussed country by country, as each of them has their own curriculum, and as the participants in the present study were not necessarily limited to those who have been schooled in England, but those who studied at an English university.

The choice of which languages are taught in a country is influenced by the economic, military and political necessities of each period, but also importantly by cultural affinities (McLelland 2017, 6). In the United Kingdom, French has traditionally been an important foreign language, which may be explained, for example, in terms of its geographical and cultural proximity, and its former central role in diplomacy and international relations. Moreover, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland promote their cultural distinctiveness through the teaching of the regional language – Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, and Irish.

French has been and is still the most likely ‘first’ foreign language in British schools. While Latin was central to boys’ schooling until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, French and German surpassed it towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (McLelland 2017). The Spanish language became more familiar to a larger number of people since the 1960s, when Spain became a popular and more affordable travel destination (ibid., 16). For a long time, German was the second most important foreign language to be taught in British schools, but Spanish teaching steadily increased and overtook German at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, both in the numbers of GCSE candidates and of primary schools teaching it (ibid.). The development of Spanish into the second most taught language in Britain is also partly due to the 2014 language education reform, which made foreign languages compulsory at a primary level in England, and one in five primary schools started offering Spanish (“Language Trends” 2017, 26). In 2017, French was taught in 77% and Spanish in 27% of English primary schools, while interestingly Mandarin Chinese was almost as popular a choice as German, 4% and 5% respectively (ibid.).

In Scotland, a new national curriculum, the Curriculum for Excellence, was introduced in 2012. As concerns language learning and teaching, the Curriculum for Excellence sets itself the ambitious “1+2” goal proclaimed by the European Union: pupils should learn two languages together with their mother tongue (“Language Learning in Scotland” 2011). A second language is advised to be taught from primary school upwards. The Curriculum Working Group does not want to take a stance as to which languages should be taught, but they mention that the languages of Scotland’s European neighbours (French, German, Italian, and Spanish) will continue to be important, while there is also a need to incorporate Chinese, Arabic, and other non-European languages (ibid., 12). As to the territorial languages, the use of Scots language is promoted at all school levels, and Gaelic education is also encouraged (ibid., 13). The Working Group acknowledge “there has been a significant and worrying decline over the past decade in the number of languages taken forward to SQA certification”, SQA meaning the Scottish educational body that

organises national examinations, and therefore the 1+2 model should be the new language learning norm (ibid., 3).

Similarly to the Scottish Curriculum, the Northern Ireland Curriculum also respects the common European goals for language learning and teaching, stating that “Early Language Learning has become a priority within the member states of the European Community as a means of improving linguistic skills as well as facilitating mobility” (“Modern Languages’ Non Statutory Guidance” 2007, 5). Second language learning is recommended but not statutory at primary level. Modern foreign languages are made compulsory at Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14), but the number of languages to be learnt in total is not specified (ibid.). At Key Stage 4 (ages 14-16), there is no requirement to provide modern languages “discretely”, but pupils should be given “opportunities” to develop the communication skills they acquired in the previous stage (ibid., 7).

Language education in Wales builds upon learning both English and Welsh starting at ‘Foundation Phase’ (ages 3 to 7) and continuing throughout the pupils’ compulsory schooling, until the age of 16 (“Foundation Phase Framework” 2015, 7; “Modern Foreign Languages in the National Curriculum for Wales” 2008, 2). The main medium of teaching may be either English or Welsh. According to the document “Modern Foreign Languages in the National Curriculum for Wales” (2008, 26), learning English and Welsh from an early age provides pupils with “a flying start when it comes to language capability”. Modern foreign languages are introduced at Key Stage 2 (ages 7 to 11). Intriguingly, the Curriculum does not clarify the amount of time or level at which the language should be taught, arguing schools can use the curriculum with flexibility “according to their own resources and time available with any year group” (ibid.). It is stated that at Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14), schools may choose which language(s) to teach, depending on resources, demand, etc. The languages may be European (e.g. French, Spanish) or ‘world’ languages (e.g. Arabic, Japanese, Mandarin, Urdu).

The National Curriculum for England (2014) requires languages to be taught at Key Stages 2 and 3, meaning ages 7-11 and 11-14. At Key Stage 2, any foreign language will do, whereas at Key Stage 3, the teaching should specifically be of a *modern* foreign language. This modern foreign language may be the same as the one at Key Stage 2, or the pupil may choose a new language. The Curriculum does not specify which languages should be learnt; it is the schools that decide on that matter. The introduction of a foreign language at Key Stage 2 – in primary schools – was not compulsory until 2014 (Long and Bolton 2016). This new curriculum has been criticised, however, for not giving much guidance to teachers on *how* to attain the required language learning levels (Ratcliffe 2013).

As stated in section 2.1.1, language competence in England has been regarded as somewhat poor in comparison with language learning in other countries. According to Long and Bolton (2016, 3) in their Parliament briefing, both industry and educational bodies have asked to raise the bar when it comes to language learning goals in the country. Hence, in 2015, it was made compulsory for most secondary pupils to take a GCSE in a modern foreign language. This can be regarded as a counter-reform, as between 2004 and 2014, the Government had made languages optional at GCSEs, which rapidly dropped the numbers of French and German students (“Language Trends” 2017, 16). In 2015, a little under half of GCSE pupils entered at least one modern foreign language GCSE, the majority of which took French, followed by Spanish and German. The only GCSE language that has been growing in popularity has been Spanish, from 5% in the mid-1990s to 14% pupils entering it in 2015 (Long and Bolton 2016, 22). Similarly, at A levels, French and German entries have been gradually falling, while those for Spanish and other languages have been increasing (ibid., 23). In fact, Long and Bolton (ibid.) state that Spanish went past German as the second most popular modern foreign language in 2008 and is still the second language to be entered in A levels.



As for language teachers, the numbers have been falling in a similar trend to that of GCSE and A level entries. Numbers of French and German teachers have dropped, and while there has been an increase in the number of Spanish teachers, the overall number of language teachers is decreasing (ibid., 24). According to Long and Bolton (ibid.), foreign language teachers are less likely to have a relevant post-A level qualification now than in the past. For example, half of Spanish teachers in the UK are not formally qualified in their subject. This mismatch is largely due to the fact that native speakers of the language have been able to fill teaching positions regardless of their training (ibid.). As stated by Ruth Bailey, a lecturer in primary foreign languages (quoted in Ratcliffe, 2013), regardless of whether the native-speakers are formally competent or not, to have exclusively native teachers is “almost admitting defeat”. Pupils may get the image that foreign languages are too difficult to learn for a non-native.

## **2.4. English as a lingua franca**

This section concentrates on the role of English as a lingua franca or international language, as various scholars (Phillipson 1992; Peel 2001; Jenkins 2007) have put forward that this distinctive status affects language attitudes. To be more precise, English native speakers’ attitudes may be influenced in a negative manner because of the prominence of their language. This section will both provide a definition of a lingua franca and explain its relation to language attitudes.

In a globalised world, encounters between people who do not share the same native language have become more and more frequent. While the majority of the world population are multilinguals, an individual’s capacity of learning languages is always limited. Whenever there is contact between speakers of different mother tongues and a need to cross language barriers, one must choose between roughly two options: translation (or interpretation) and the use of a lingua franca (Edwards 1994, 39). In many instances, the latter may well be the most effective method as regards cost, time, and effort spent in the interaction. Translation may be more accurate at times, but

it has various downsides. Hiring a translator or interpreter usually requires money, and it takes time to complete a translation. When conversing, interpreting may have a negative influence on the speakers, because the interaction becomes more tedious and less natural. Therefore, a common language, a lingua franca, may facilitate intercultural communication.

A lingua franca is commonly defined as a language used for communication between people who do not share a first language (Jenkins 2007, 1). English is undeniably today's lingua franca *par excellence*, as its spread is unprecedented in terms of its geographical extent and the depth of its penetration in different domains (Phillipson 1992, 6). In addition to its large number of native speakers, English is taught as "the main foreign language" in almost every country (Cook 2003, 25). Most of international communication, be it on the Internet or face to face, occurs in English. Popular culture, business, and education are only a few of the fields where the English language occupies a leading role. However, the global status of English has led some of its native speakers to become too comfortable, assuming that everyone speaks English and that learning foreign languages is neither beneficial nor needed. In the United Kingdom, the advance of English has proved to be to the detriment of other languages (Phillipson 1992, 17). As Peel (2001, 13) predicted in the early 2000s, "[t]he triumph of the English language in world trade, technology, culture and science, ...may yet prove to be more of a curse than a blessing for those of us who speak it as a mother tongue." The decline in the study of modern foreign languages in the UK, both in schools and in higher education, has triggered concerns not only in the field of linguistics but also within the business world, the British Academy, and the UK government (Handley 2011, 149).

The role of English as a lingua franca affects people's attitudes towards different languages, for example, in terms of how necessary or useful they perceive learning and/or teaching them. One view held by native speakers of English is called *linguistic imperialism*, where "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (Phillipson 1992, 47). This subtype

of cultural imperialism affects language policies and education and is legitimised on the grounds of professionalism as well as cultural and linguistic Anglocentricity (ibid.). In other words, the world is seen through an English speaker's lens, for whom the English or Anglo-American culture and language are considered, either consciously or subconsciously, preminent. In addition, it is implied that only native speakers are professionally competent in English.

*Linguistic purism* is another strict view concerned with English that some of its native speakers maintain. From a purist perspective, one language variety or language (in this case, English) is 'purer' and thus superior to other varieties or languages, and it should be protected against 'impure' elements, such as foreign words (Auty 1973 and Hall 1942; in Thomas 1991, 10-11). Similarly to linguistic imperialism, purism is also intertwined with politics and culture. It can be motivated by a nationalist sentiment, or a want to preserve or find national identity (ibid., 43-34). Consequently, while English is a world language with numerous non-native varieties, linguistic imperialists and purists see the language as the sole property of its native speakers. This stance rests on the assumption that there is a standard form of the language, and any divergence from it is interpreted as incorrect language use and a "decline in standards" (Jenkins 2007, 35-6).

With regard to the use of English as a lingua franca, it is non-native *accents* in particular that are often evaluated negatively by native English speakers (Jenkins 2007, 81-90). This stance may be rationalised with intelligibility issues in real-life communication (ibid.). Following this view, the less comprehensible the accent is, the more negative the attitude towards this variant and/or its speakers will be. For example, a Spanish accent being clearer to a native English speaker than a Chinese one, the Spanish English variant and its speakers will be rated more positively than Chinese English and its speakers. But intelligibility does not account for all evaluations of non-native English: people's attitudes are also influenced by how 'heavy' an accent is perceived to be and by the social connotations linked to a particular accent (ibid.). Hence, while an accent may be easy to

comprehend, attitudes towards it may still be negative because it is commonly associated to a low level of education, rural areas, or the financial elite.

In the above, I mentioned some attitudes concerning language. The following section will now provide a general definition of the concept of *language attitudes* and exemplify them in more detail.

### **3. Language attitudes**

Before carrying out a study on language attitudes, one must first be acquainted with earlier literature on the topic. In this section, based on research by renowned linguists and psychologists, I will first introduce the notion of language attitudes (3.1.), then give an account of the different methods used to investigate them (3.2.). Previous studies on the topic (3.3.), principally in Finland and in the UK, will also be discussed in order to situate the study in its branch of research and to provide a basis for comparison.

#### **3.1. Definition of attitudes and language attitudes**

The term *attitude* is one that is frequently used and heard but which is rather difficult to define. It might be said that someone “has attitude”, when they have a negative stance towards something (or in some cases, everything), or I might say “I have a positive attitude towards language learning”, meaning I aim to learn more languages, see it as beneficial, or feel happy when I am learning a new language. As we can see, in every-day life, the word *attitude* is used to denote a variety of cognitive and emotional processes: beliefs, feelings, opinions, moods, and so forth.

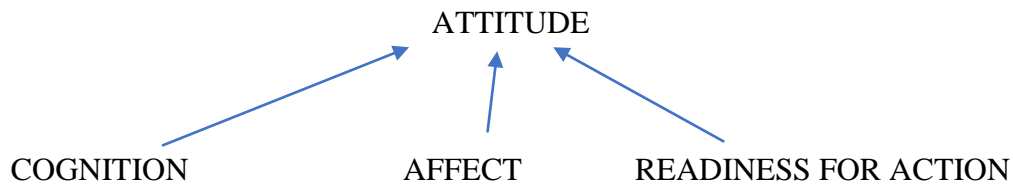
The study of language attitudes falls within the field of applied linguistics, which studies the relation of linguistic knowledge to “decision making in the real world” (Cook 2003, 5). Applied linguistics is concerned with practical issues related to language, such as second-language education

or language planning (ibid., 7). Therefore, applied linguistics may employ methods and theories from different disciplines, such as pedagogy and psychology. While attitudes and languages have always existed, the academic study of language attitudes is fairly young. It can be considered to have begun in the 1960s, when Lambert et al. (1960) examined the attitudes of Canadians towards English and French and to speakers of these languages (Kalaja 1999, 46).

To explain what language attitudes involve, one must first define the concept of *attitude*, a task that has been attempted by numerous researchers in psychology. As stated by Edwards (1982, 20, in Ryan and Giles 1982), there is no universal agreement on the definition of the word, and *attitude* is often mistakenly used as a synonym of *belief*. In fact, beliefs, in addition to feelings and predispositions to act in a certain way, are one of the three components of attitudes (ibid.). Eagly and Chaiken (1998, 269; quoted in Taylor and Marsden 2014, 903) describe *attitude* as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour”. Experimental social psychologists have agreed that attitudes are a type of long-lasting feelings concerning an object, a person or an issue, and they are either positive or negative (Cacioppo and Petty 1984, in Ryan and Giles 1984, 189). Because attitudes are affected by one’s past and significant people in one’s life, Dörnyei (2003, 8-9) also regards attitudes as fairly persistent. While attitudes may be resistant to change, they can still be subject to it. Changes derive from an individual’s personality; a certain attitude can be adopted because it improves one’s self-concept or is closer to their personal values (Cacioppo and Petty 1984). For instance, an individual’s attitude to foreign languages or language learning may become more positive because they value multiculturalism or perceive themselves as open-minded.

Starting from the 1970s, language attitudes have generally been defined from a mentalist viewpoint (Kalaja 1999, 47). That is, attitudes are regarded as a mental state which is caused by a stimulus and which may influence individuals’ behaviour. Furthermore, from a mentalist

perspective, language attitudes can be divided into three subgroups: cognitive, affective, and conative. This three-component model of attitude (ibid.) is displayed in Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1. The three-component model of attitude (Baker 1992, 13; as displayed in Kalaja 1999, 47)*

In other words, language attitudes consist of thoughts, feelings, and potential actions triggered by different languages. In addition, attitudes towards languages may convey information about the attitudes towards communities that speak those language. Indeed, as Gardner (1985, 7) points out, language attitudes are linked to our views of our own versus other cultural communities. Language attitudes also vary in respect of how specific or general they are. Gardner (ibid., 9) gives the example of attitudes towards French speakers. These attitudes are rather specific, as their object is somewhat concrete, at least in theory. Ethnocentrism, the belief that one's culture or ethnicity is superior than others, or xenophilia, the love of foreign peoples and customs, differ from the previous in that these attitudes do not have a clear referent (e.g. 'speakers of French') (Gardner, ibid.). If we come back to the imperialist views of some monolingual English speakers discussed in section 2.4., we can see that they too are rather general. For instance, the negative views on foreign language learning that are typical to linguistic imperialism are not directed at a specific language or speakers of a language, but to something broader. Gardner (ibid.) also underlines that the general/specific distinction affects the reliability of the attitude measurement tools. When the attitude of the subject is more general, they are likely to respond differentially to two similar study items because the generality of the attitude allows different interpretations.

While linguists regard all languages as equal and arbitrary systems (Cook 2003), laypeople often see some languages as "more complex", "more beautiful", or "more logical" than others.

These evaluations of different languages do not intrinsically reflect linguistic or aesthetic features, but they express social conventions and preferences, which according to Edwards (1982, 21), reflect an awareness of the status accorded to speakers of different languages or varieties. People may believe that a language can really be assessed as more logical than another on the grounds of structural factors, or more beautiful because of aesthetic ones. However, linguists maintain that these kinds of evaluations are socially constructed.

In the present study, the main point of interest is the attitudes that the informants have towards different languages. This study does not aim to explore the attitudes to different varieties of a language or to speakers of foreign languages. Nonetheless, responses dealing with these aspects will be commented upon as well, as previous research has proved that attitudes to language varieties, different languages and their speakers are all connected to each other.

The study of language attitudes is important, because one's thoughts and feelings influence one's actions. Gardner (1982, in Ryan and Giles) argues that although people's responses to attitude objects or situations are not determined by their attitudes, attitudes do have an impact on them. As regards language learning attitudes, research has usually supported the claim that attitudes and motivation affect one's success in foreign languages, more so than factors like linguistic giftedness or aptitude (Gardner 1982, 135; Kalaja 1999, 56). Gardner and Lambert (1972, 143) further state that attitudes are more likely to affect foreign language learning than vice versa. Attitudes and motivation are also viewed as greater factors in language achievement than aptitude or intelligence (ibid.).

However, as Gardner (1982, in Ryan and Giles) points out, it is not always easy to predict one's behaviour, including language learning, on the basis of attitudes. Attitudes change and people may have contradictory opinions, which makes the study of language attitudes complicated. One may have a negative stance towards French, based on their responses on an attitude scale, but this does not predict they will not want to learn the language or that they dislike all speakers of French.

French may still be seen as necessary in their career or they may have French friends even if they evaluate the language in negative terms. Indeed, there is an inconsistency between attitudes and behaviour, as the dynamics influencing an individual's actions are complex. Likewise, Eiser (1986, 52) maintains that attitudes should not be used predictively, because numerous studies have pointed towards the fact that attitude and behaviour do not correlate, at least not to a great extent. There is thus a need to take different background factors into account when analysing language attitudes and to avoid interpreting responses in a subjective manner.

### **3.2. Approaches to the study of language attitudes**

While the section above aimed at defining attitudes and language attitudes, this section will provide an overview of the principal approaches to the study of language attitudes. Because language attitudes are related to a wide range of academic fields, the methods used to study them also vary greatly. Traditionally, research on language attitudes has been conducted by using either a direct or an indirect methodology. More recent methods include most importantly the discursive view, which will also be discussed briefly. The three main approaches to language attitude research – direct, indirect, and other methods – will be presented and assessed in the following subsections, starting from direct methods.

#### **3.2.1 Direct methods**

Direct approaches to language attitude research use either oral or written data collection procedures, and they essentially consist of questionnaires and interviews (Kalaja 1999, 49; Garrett et al. 2003, 25-26). These methods are regarded as *direct* because the informants are asked about their language attitudes in a straightforward fashion. The questions in the questionnaire or interview may be either open or close-ended. Questionnaires may consist of statements like “I like the Welsh language” or



“You are not liked if you speak Welsh”, which are often to be evaluated on a Likert scale. For example, the participant may be asked to choose their degree of agreement with a given statement on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “I strongly agree” and 5 means “I strongly disagree” (Kalaja, *ibid.*). Alternatively, the informant may be asked to listen to a speech sample and to describe the speaker in their own words. They may have to answer a simple question like “What do you think of the speaker based on the speech sample?” (*ibid.*). What is crucial in direct methods is that the participant is aware that the study is concerned with language attitudes and is openly asked about them.

Direct methods have, nevertheless, received some criticism. According to Garrett et al. (2003, 27), typical drawbacks in direct-approach research include, among other things, the following: “hypothetical questions, strongly slanted questions, multiple questions, social-desirability bias, acquiescence bias”. Hence, when preparing questionnaires or interviews, the researcher should avoid hypothetical questions of the type “How *would* you react if...”, questions with loaded words (e.g. ‘Nazi’, ‘strike-breakers’), and questions with multiple components, that is, items including double negatives or more than one question (*ibid.*). Because the participant knows the study deals with attitudes, they may not be totally honest when answering. The informants’ bias are also a factor that influences the results of the study. Garrett et al. (*ibid.*, 28-29) explain that people are likely to provide ‘socially appropriate’ answers rather than give their honest opinion (social-desirability bias), and some people tend to agree with any study item, for example to seek approval from the interviewer (acquiescence bias).

### **3.2.2. Indirect methods**

Kalaja (1999, 50) states that indirect methods include all those experiments that made use of the matched-guise technique developed by Lambert and his colleagues in 1960. This technique is probably the best-known one for measuring attitudes, and the majority of language-attitude studies

have utilised it (ibid.). The matched-guise technique is an empirical one, as it involves observing and recording the reactions of the informants upon listening to different speech samples. The underlying assumption is that the way we speak affects others' perceptions of us: people classify each other into groups and evaluate others' personalities based on their speech style (ibid., 50). For instance, someone with a 'standard' British pronunciation (Received Pronunciation) may be thought of as belonging to the upper class and they may be evaluated as intelligent and professional based solely on a speech sample.

The matched-guise technique consists of making informants listen to various speech samples of (supposedly) different people reading the same text (Giles and Coupland 1991, 34). Consequently, what is studied is not *what* people say but *how* they say it. In this method, the participants evaluate speakers' entire personality, professionalism, and social skills based on how they speak (Kalaja 1999, 50). The ways in which the informants assess the speakers in the sample vary. A speaker's personality or the group they belong to may be assessed directly from how they speak, or the language/accent/dialect may first make people draw conclusions on the group the speaker pertains to, and the personality is assessed indirectly, via this group membership (ibid.). Indirect methods can thus teach a lot about 'hidden' attitudes to different languages or dialects and their speakers.

Lambert et al. (1960) developed the matched-guise technique in order to investigate on French and English native speakers' perceptions of each other in Montreal, Canada (Giles and Coupland 1991, 33). The speech samples consisted of Canadian bilinguals reading the same text in French and English. The "judges", who were French and English Canadian students, were asked to listen to the recordings, form an idea of the speakers, and assess them in terms of personal traits (e.g. intelligence, friendliness) by filling rating scales on a questionnaire (ibid., 34). The main results were that English Canadians rated speakers of their own group more positively, while French Canadians favoured speakers of their ethnic group. The study was praised for being able to

elicit private attitudes from the participants and for demonstrating that language greatly affects how people form impressions of each other (ibid., 35). Lambert et al.'s study has been replicated in numerous studies around the world, especially in Anglophone countries – Wales, Australia, and the United States (ibid.).

Indirect methods have also been criticised. Hyrkstedt and Kalaja (1998, 346) argue that the matched-guise technique has been questioned, among other factors, because of its lack of reliability and validity when it comes to real-life situations. Furthermore, the subjects are forced to answer questions and choose from the answers written by the researchers, instead of being able to use their own words and justify their choices (ibid.). This is why some researchers have preferred to use a different method from the traditional techniques. These other methods will be introduced in the next section.

### **3.2.3. Other methods**

More recent methods for studying language attitudes include, most importantly, the discursive approach (Hyrkstedt and Kalaja 1998, 347). In the discursive, or discourse analytic, approach, attitudes are considered 'evaluative practices', which are present in discourse – either text or speech. The data can be collected from everyday spoken interaction or writings (Kalaja 1999: 64). A researcher should not attempt to discover the 'true' attitudes of a person, but rather analyse how attitudes are constructed in discourse and for what purpose (Hyrkstedt and Kalaja 1998, 347-348).

Hyrkstedt and Kalaja (ibid., 348) point out that discourse analysis is not as straightforward a method as the matched-guise technique:

"In fact, [discourse analysis] only provides a general framework for a qualitative analysis of publicly available records of interaction that provide contexts for arguing for or against varieties of a language or different languages as well as their speakers."

The objective is then to examine how the language attitudes of a certain group are constructed in one specific context, for instance in Finns' replies to a letter-to-the-Editor concerning the English language (ibid.). This methodology may be criticised for its vagueness, but similarly, it provides considerable flexibility to the analysis of language attitudes instead of leading to too strict conclusions, as may happen with indirect methods.

### **3.3. Previous studies on language attitudes**

From a comparative perspective, it can be fruitful to compare and contrast phenomena in two rather different countries located in the same continent. Although the present study focuses on language attitudes in England, it may be worthwhile to have a look at Finland, where people are – stereotypically speaking – fluent multilinguals and motivated language learners. Whereas English is spoken worldwide, Finnish is barely used outside Finland, so the countries could, in theory, be placed at opposite ends of a language attitude and competence spectrum. Subsection 3.1. will present a few relevant studies on language attitudes in Finland and a related study conducted in Russia. As the target group of the present study are British students, I will naturally introduce previous research on language attitudes in the UK as well (subsection 3.2.).

#### **3.3.1. Previous studies in Finland and Russia**

Because the present study was conducted all the way from Finland, a natural point of comparison to British students' attitudes will be Finnish students' attitudes. Several Finnish Pro Gradu (MA) theses have been concerned with language attitudes in Finland, and they provided inspiration for the present study. In general, it seems that Finnish students' (at secondary and upper secondary level) language attitudes are rather positive. It should thus be interesting to find out about similarities to and differences from British university students' attitudes in the present study.

Kansikas (2002) realised a study on Finnish language attitudes inspired by a study by V.B. Kashkin (2001) on language attitudes of non-linguist language users of different ages in Russia. Both studies included a questionnaire task where participants were asked to complete sentences of the type “The most serious language is ...” with any language of their choice. Below are displayed Kashkin’s (2001) main findings regarding this part of the study.

*Table 1. Russian attitudes to languages (Kashkin 2001, 33; as displayed in Kansikas 2002, 34-35)*

Question	1st choice	%	2nd choice	%	3rd choice	%
The most beautiful language	French	50.0	Russian	31.3	English	12.0
The most ugly language	German	37.5	English	18.8	-	-
The most precise language	Russian	75.0	Latin	19.0	-	-
The most difficult language	Chinese	50.0	Japanese	20.0	Russian	12.0
The easiest language	Russian	43.8	don't know	31.0	English	18.0
The richest language	Russian	93.8	-	-	-	-
The poorest language	don't know	50.0	Chukchee	31.5	-	-
The funniest language	Chinese	37.5	Japanese	25.0	Ukrainian	12.0
The most serious language	English	31.3	German	25.0	Russian	19.0
The most correct language	Russian/ I don't know	25.0/ 25.0	English	19.5	Greek	8.0
I would like to learn	English	50.0	French	11.8	-	-

Kansikas' (2002) Pro Gradu questionnaire was answered by 70 Finnish upper secondary students. Her questionnaire included a duplicate of Kashkin's (2001) sentence-completion task, and the following results were obtained:

*Table 2. Finnish attitudes to languages (Kansikas 2002, 64-65)*

<b>Question</b>	<b>1st choice</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2nd choice</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>3rd choice</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>The most beautiful language</b>	French	37.7	Finnish	27.5	English	11.6
<b>The ugliest language</b>	Russian	47.0	German	18.2	Swedish	16.7
<b>The most precise language</b>	English	33.3	German	27.5	Swedish	24.6
<b>The most difficult language</b>	Russian	24.3	Chinese	21.4	French	18.6
<b>The easiest language</b>	English	44.3	Finnish	31.4	Swedish	25.7
<b>The richest language</b>	English	34.3	French	24.3	Finnish	17.1
<b>The poorest language</b>	Swedish	37.5	Estonian	29.7	Russian	12.5
<b>The funniest language</b>	Estonian	27.1	Finnish English	11.4 11.4	Spanish Swedish	8.6 8.6
<b>The most serious language</b>	German	43.9	English	13.6	Russian Swedish	12.1 12.1
<b>The most correct language</b>	German	30.4	Swedish	29.0	English	24.6
<b>I would like to learn</b>	Spanish	37.9	Italian	31.8	French	18.2

The answers to Kansikas' questionnaire revealed that the students regarded English as the easiest, richest, and most precise language; German as the most correct and serious language; Russian as the ugliest and most difficult language; French as the most beautiful; Estonian as the funniest; and Swedish as the poorest (ibid., 109). When asked what language the informants would like to learn, the most popular response was Spanish. Kansikas (ibid.) obtained partly similar results to those of Kashkin (2001): both Russian and Finnish students considered French the most beautiful language,

while the informants' mother tongue was also a popular answer. Chinese (Mandarin) was viewed as the most difficult by most Russians but also by many Finns. The ugliest language, on the other hand, was Russian followed by German for the Finnish students, while Russians regarded German as the least appealing. As for the easiest language, Finnish students mostly opted for English, whereas Russians considered their own native language the easiest. Kansikas (2002) argues that this may be explained in terms of the Finnish students' "heavy exposure" to the English language in their free time. The "richest" and "poorest" languages received differing answers from the two nationalities as well. Finns seemed reluctant to mention their own language as the richest, while Russian was the only language given by the Russian students. The Finnish informants regarded Swedish, Estonian, and Russian as the poorest languages, which according to Kansikas, may have a connection to historical factors and negative attitudes towards Russia and Sweden. The most serious languages for both Russians and Finns were German and English. Kansikas (*ibid.*) suggests that English might be seen as serious because of its global role in news, science and other 'serious' contexts, and German because of its powerful military history.

Similarly, Ruokolainen (2012) focused on Finnish upper secondary students' language (learning) attitudes. He also chose a questionnaire as the method for analysing their beliefs and their motivation to learn foreign languages. Ruokolainen (*ibid.*) found out that English was the most liked language, but the students' motivation to learn it was mostly goal-oriented: the informants wanted to learn it because of the global importance of English rather than for the pleasure of knowing the language. French was considered the most difficult and Russian was the most disliked language (*ibid.*, 88). Especially as concerns Russian, the claim that language attitudes are intertwined with attitudes towards the speakers of these languages seems to hold true, as Russian and Finnish people have a difficult common history. Interestingly, participants in Ruokolainen's study found Swedish and French the least useful languages for their future. This is somewhat surprising, as Swedish is Finland's neighbouring country, and French is an important language in

the European Union and it is spoken in several countries in Europe and worldwide. As in Kansikas' (2002) study, students in Ruokolainen's (2012) Pro Gradu thesis were most interested in learning Spanish, if given the opportunity, and overall it was considered an easy and useful language by most. It could be said that the Spanish language has been rather 'trendy' in Finland in the past few decades, which can also be seen in the availability and popularity of music and other sorts of entertainment in the language (e.g. TV series, blogs). Nonetheless, it seems that some type of Anglocentrism has partly reached Finland, as around half of the students in Ruokolainen's study were of the opinion that English should be the only compulsory language at school.

### **3.3.2. Previous studies in the UK**

As established earlier, some of the major sociolinguistic studies on language attitudes have been undertaken in Anglophone countries (see Sections 3.1. and 3.2.). Traditionally, these kinds of studies have concentrated on the English language, English dialects, and attitudes towards regional or community languages, e.g. Welsh or Punjabi. For instance, there have been ground-breaking studies on attitudes towards 'standard' and 'non-standard' varieties of British and American English. In 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain, research on foreign language attitudes has been specifically concerned with language *learning* attitudes, probably because of the United Kingdom's alleged low performance in modern foreign languages. In this section, I will introduce a couple of language attitude studies from the UK that might be relevant for the present study.

Taylor and Marsden (2014) conducted an experiment in three secondary schools in England to examine whether pupils' perceptions and attitudes are linked to choosing to study foreign languages at an optional level. The study provides evidence that attitudes to language learning and foreign language classes can indeed influence uptake of a foreign language. As concerns the effect of gender on attitudes, the study suggests that boys have more negative attitudes towards language learning than girls, as uptake of a foreign language and languages in general were less interesting to



them than to girls (ibid., 902). In addition, Taylor and Marsden (ibid., 914) claim that “explicit advocacy”, preferably beginning from an earlier age, may improve students’ attitudes to foreign languages and encourage uptake.

Another relevant study, although not directly concerned with attitudes, is Busse and Walter’s (2013) longitudinal study on foreign language learning motivation, where the target group consisted of first-year modern foreign language students at two renowned universities in the United Kingdom. Despite the students’ having enrolled for language studies voluntarily, Busse and Walter (ibid.) found out that their intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy beliefs for listening and speaking decreased over the course of the year. The study stressed the importance of making students’ voices heard, especially as the first year at university may have a major impact on later academic achievement and as the number of students enrolling in modern foreign language degrees has been in decline in the UK according to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (ibid., 449).

As a whole, studies on foreign language attitudes in the United Kingdom have pointed towards the fact that the extent and level of language learning in the country is disturbingly low. There are several reasons behind this lack of linguistic competence, which have also been said to lead to a socioeconomic, political, and national security “crisis” (Taylor and Marsden 2014, 903). One of these causes is the perceived lack of relevance of foreign languages due to the international status of English. People may perceive other languages as unnecessary or unimportant, because English is spoken worldwide (Taylor and Marsden 2014; Busse and Walter 2013; Handley 2011). This view and more politically motivated ones may be traced back to certain Anglophone mass media which, according to Taylor and Marsden (2014, 903), “propagate Eurosceptic, racist, or narrow-minded views”. Other reasons for low linguistic competence listed by these researchers include perceived difficulty of languages (for instance, languages may seem harder than any other school subject), perceived low ability (the view that one is “bad” at languages), and inadequate teaching methods (e.g. lack of communicative tasks). Taylor and Marsden (ibid.) also explain low

language skills as a consequence of simplistic notions of career-relevance. For instance, people may believe that learning a foreign language is only relevant for those who want to move and work abroad, and that foreign languages are not needed if one stays in the UK.

Gruber and Tonkyn (2017) compared German and English learners of French as a first foreign language. The target group of the study were 14-16 –year-old students from comparable schools in Germany and England. Both French language skills and motivation were assessed by means of a writing task and a questionnaire. According to Gruber and Tonkyn (*ibid.*, 316), it has often been claimed in the literature that the low competence of British language learners, especially secondary-school students, is due to factors extrinsic to the classroom. Above all, the global role of English has been regarded as a key factor in the lack of motivation of native English speakers. However, based on their study, Gruber and Tonkyn (*ibid.*, 331) emphasise that negative attitudes to language learning in England are also largely due to the focus on teaching for the GCSE examination, the insistence on the learning of formulaic pieces of language, the relative poverty of the input and restricted expectations of output. These pedagogical and curricular factors may play a significant role in secondary-level learners' under-performance and low motivation.

#### **4. Objectives and methodology of the present study**

While the above sections provided relevant background information and presented previous works on the topic, this section focuses on introducing the present study and outlining its objectives and methodology. First of all, I will define my research questions in detail (4.1.). In Section 4.2., I will move on to describe the data collection process, including the methodology that was chosen, why a questionnaire was used for data collection and how it was designed (4.2.1.), as well as the concrete procedure that was undertaken (4.2.2.). Finally, Section 4.3. will provide an explication of how the coding of the data was conducted as preparation for the analysis.

## 4.1. Research questions

The present study aims to explore the language attitudes held by students of politics in England. British students were chosen as the informants of the study for various reasons. Because of the recent Brexit vote outcome and the UK's exceptional monolingualism as compared to most other countries in the world, England seemed like a setting of topical importance for attitudinal research. In addition, the distinctive role of English as an international language was expected to have an influence on native speakers' language attitudes.

Furthermore, the target group was narrowed to politics students because they would supposedly be more engaged in societal matters, possibly being aware of the significance of languages at the national and the international level. I also presumed that languages would play a role in their future careers, as the British Academy has stated that foreign languages have "strategic importance" for diplomacy, national security and defence, especially today because of the extent of global interconnectedness (British Academy 2013). It would be interesting to see if the students recognised this kind of career relevance in addition to the cognitive and social benefits of language learning.

Hence, my research questions can be summarised as follows:

1. What kinds of attitudes do British students of politics display towards different languages, including their native language, and multilingualism?
2. Is there a correlation between the participants' gender and attitudes? If so, what kind of correlation?

The first question is the focal point of the study, and it can be answered very broadly, for instance, in terms of how the participants evaluate different, specific languages and their speakers, how important or necessary foreign languages are to them, and how they view the status of English in the world. It must be pointed out that 'different languages' refers to all existing languages, including the participants' native language English. As 'multilingualism' is quite a far-reaching term, I will interpret attitudes to multilingualism to encompass the participants' thoughts and

feelings regarding foreign language competence, foreign language learning, and speakers of multiple languages. It must be emphasised that the researcher cannot enter a participant's mind, and hence interpretations of language attitudes will be mostly tentative.

The second question can be answered by including the participants' gender distribution in the analysis of responses to a particular questionnaire item, and by further drawing conclusions on whether gender correlates with a certain type of attitudes. The main point of this research question will be to examine whether men have more negative language attitudes than women, as has been suggested in earlier studies (e.g. Taylor and Marsden 2014), or whether my results differ from previous ones.

## **4.2. Collection of data**

The data for the present study were collected via an online questionnaire (see Appendix). I created the questionnaire by using Google Forms, as it seemed simple and clear enough and the link to the survey could easily be forwarded by e-mail to the politics departments selected for this study. In the following subsections, the questionnaire as a direct method of collecting data (4.2.1.) and the actual procedure (4.2.2.) will be described in more detail.

### **4.2.1. Questionnaire**

While parts of the study required an approach of a more discursive nature, especially the final open-ended questions, this study was primarily approached with a direct methodology (cf. Section 3.2.1.), which led the researcher to choose between roughly two data collection methods: a questionnaire or an interview. A questionnaire was chosen as the method of gathering data because of its overall efficiency. Questionnaires require minimal effort from both the researcher and the participant when compared to, say, interviews (Dörnyei 2003, 9). In addition, online questionnaires can be easily sent

to a great number of people and can provide a substantial amount of both quantitative and qualitative information within a short time period. Dörnyei (ibid., 8-9) listed different categories of data that a questionnaire can provide: *factual* (for example, age, gender, language learning history), *behavioural* (e.g. habits, personal history), and *attitudinal* (attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests, and values). I constructed my questionnaire to yield mostly attitudinal data, but I also included factual questions in order to find out if the participants' background affected their attitudes. In order to minimise the most common pitfalls involved in direct methods (Garrett et al. 2003, cf. Section 3.2.1), the questionnaire was intended to exclude hypothetical questions, strongly slanted questions, and multiple questions.

The questionnaire included four sections, which were constructed following most of Dörnyei's (2003, 17-62) guidelines. For example, I endeavoured to create a clear structure and make the questionnaire concise so that it would take less than 30 minutes to complete, I provided both general instructions and task-specific instructions, emphasised confidentiality and anonymity, and avoided negative constructions. The types of questionnaire items were also varied: rating scales, sentence completion items, specific open questions, and short-answer questions.

In the first section of the questionnaire, the participants were required to provide some background information: their gender, age, mother tongue(s), possible other languages and their level of proficiency in those (basic, intermediate, or fluent). Dörnyei (2003, 61) suggests that such personal questions should be placed at the end of the questionnaire. However, these questions were hardly too intrusive or off-putting towards the informants, whereas asking for name, marital status, or religion might have required more sensitiveness.

The second section was based on an assignment originally designed by V.B. Kashkin (2001), who studied attitudes to foreign languages in Russia, and replicated in Kansikas' (2002) study on Finns' language attitudes. The participants were asked to fill in sentences of the form "The most X language is ...", where X is an adjective, with a language of their choice. Obviously, it was

assumed that participants would name languages, for example, English, German, or Mandarin Chinese. The aim was to find out about participants' attitudes towards specific languages. Contrary to Kashkin's (2001) and Kansikas' (2002) sentence-completion task, I left out the adjectives "correct" and "precise" and focused the task on adjective pairs, such as "poor" and "rich". This was done for two reasons: firstly, because it seemed more logical to have pairs of opposite adjectives in order to investigate on possibly contradictory attitudes, and secondly, because this task was not the main focus of the study and it had to be made more concise.

Indeed, the study also investigated on broader language-attitudinal questions. The third section of the survey consisted of attitudinal and motivational statements, which the participants had to evaluate on a Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The statements were related to, among others, the role of English as a lingua franca ("English is a useful tool for international communication"), and people speaking in a foreign language ("When I hear someone speaking a foreign language, I wish I could speak it like them").

Open-ended questions were reserved to the final part of the questionnaire (fourth section), since it has been claimed that this would limit their potential negative consequences and that people prefer to answer them when they have already dedicated time to answering the questionnaire (Dörnyei 2003, 62). In addition, taking human psychology into account, this section was made optional, whereas the previous sections were compulsory. As some people are taken aback by the amount of work that open-ended questions require, it could be expected that answering these questions would be more motivating if it was voluntary. I also endeavoured to make the open-ended questions interesting to answer from the perspective of a politics student, as they concerned the need or benefits of learning a foreign language as well as the possible impact of the Brexit referendum on the need to learn foreign languages.

One could also write down their email address in case they were interested in taking part in a short interview. An interview was deemed to be useful in case some questions had been

misinterpreted or if the researcher wanted the participant to elaborate their answer to a specific question.

#### **4.2.2. Procedure**

The questionnaire was sent by email in three batches. The data collection process was initiated in the spring of 2017. I originally messaged four English universities' politics departments so that they would forward the link to their students, who were undergraduate or postgraduate when applicable (for example, the University of Winchester only offers undergraduate studies in Politics and Global Studies). In the email, I briefly introduced myself and the research topic and kindly asked the member of staff in question to pass on my message and the link to the questionnaire to their students. My original plan was to focus solely on the University of Winchester, but because of lack of responses, the target group was expanded to politics students at any university located in England. After emailing a few randomly selected universities, I received responses from the Universities of Kent, Bristol, and Oxford Brookes. Because the number of responses stayed low (32 valid responses), I made the decision to send the questionnaire to considerably more universities in December of the same year. This provided me with answers from the Universities of York and Loughborough as well. In the end, 90 responses were considered valid for analysis (for information on how responses were selected, see section 4.3.). In total, I sent the survey to 14 different universities based in England, but only six of them took part in the survey.

In the end, interviews were not considered necessary for this MA thesis, as the 90 questionnaire responses provided an amount of data which was judged to be highly sufficient for the type of study in question. Furthermore, the spoken data would have made more sense if it had been collected soon upon receiving the written response of the participant, rather than up to a year later.

### 4.3. Coding

Because the questionnaire encompassed a variety of question types, the coding and analysis of the data will be of both quantitative and qualitative nature. After going through all of the data, 90 responses were considered relevant for the present study and valid for analysis. Responses from students who did not speak English as their mother tongue were discarded (16 out of 106), as they were not the target of this study and they would have required a separate analysis section.

The responses were analysed as a whole or individually when necessary, for example in order to find out if there was a correlation between the participant's gender and their answer to a certain question. In these cases, I printed out and divided the data manually: male and female informants were put into two separate piles when looking at a given section. To discuss the responses to the open-ended questions, I also named each participant, e.g. M1 or F2, where M stands for male and F for female, and the number indicates the order in which the responses were received. While the methodology of this study is mostly representative of direct methods, the open responses were reflected upon with a more discursive approach, by avoiding too straightforward conclusions (cf. Section 3.2.).

Google Forms provided summaries of the answers to each question, for example in the form of charts. However, some charts were somewhat hard to decipher because of the length or the number of responses. Especially when it comes to the answers to the sentence-completion task, the high number of differing responses made Google charts unclear. In addition, the present study aims to explore gender differences, but Google Forms did not provide charts with male-female ratios. Consequently, I created my own charts for the analysis.

As concerns the responses to the open-ended questions, I decided to group them thematically, for example into positive versus negative responses, to yes/no questions, or highlighting frequent keywords from individuals' answers. The answers were then analysed more thoroughly by selecting longer representative responses and discussing their meaning.



## 5. Analysis

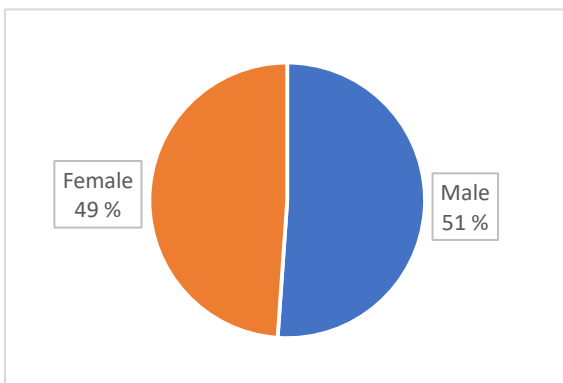
The section above depicted the objectives and methodology of the present study, including how the data were collected and coded. In the following section, I will move on to analyse the participants' answers to the different sections of the questionnaire. The information will be discussed concretely with the help of charts and figures presenting the distribution of answers. Naturally, the most important findings will be pointed out verbally. They will also be contrasted with the literature and previous studies mentioned in the sections above. The data will be analysed in the same order as the questions appear in the survey, starting from the background information (5.1.) and moving on to the sentence-completion assignment inspired by Kashkin's (2001) study on Russians' language attitudes (5.2.). The attitudinal and motivational statements will be discussed in subsection 5.3., and responses to the open-ended questions will form the final part of the analysis (5.4.).

### 5.1. Background information

First of all, I will explore the background of the informants to the survey. As stated earlier, the questionnaire began by enquiring about basic information on the participant, including factors such as gender, age, and language competence.

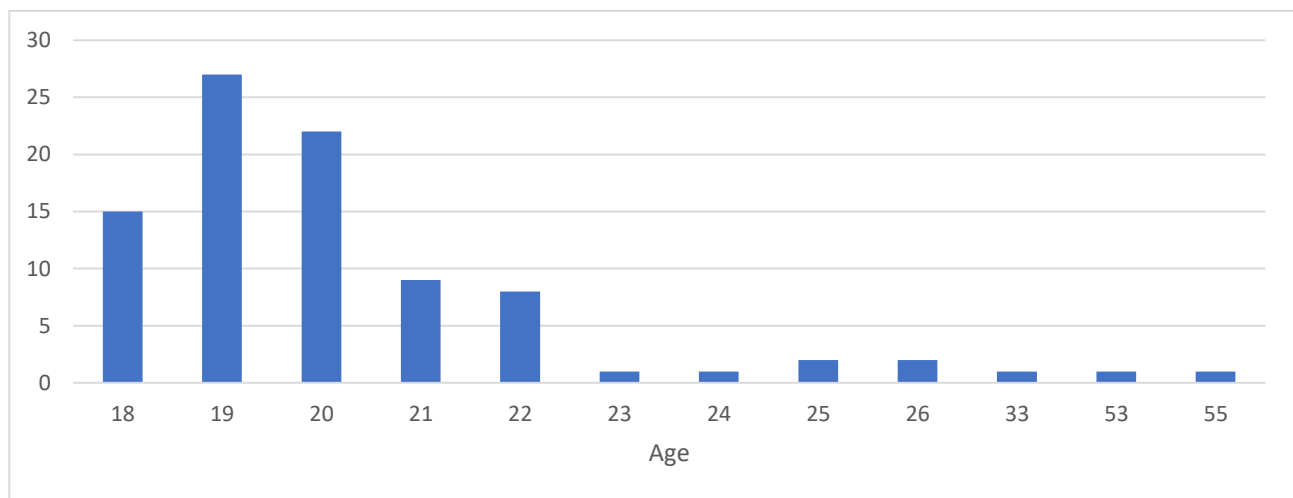
Out of the 90 informants, 46 (roughly 51%) were male, and 44 (49%) were female, as can be seen from Chart 1 below, so both genders were well represented in the study.

*Chart 1. The participants' gender*



The age distribution was somewhat extensive, as the participants' ages varied between 18 and 55 years (see Chart 2). Nonetheless, it must be underlined that the overwhelming majority, 90%, were young adults between 18 and 22 years of age, as this is the typical age span for university-level studies in the United Kingdom.

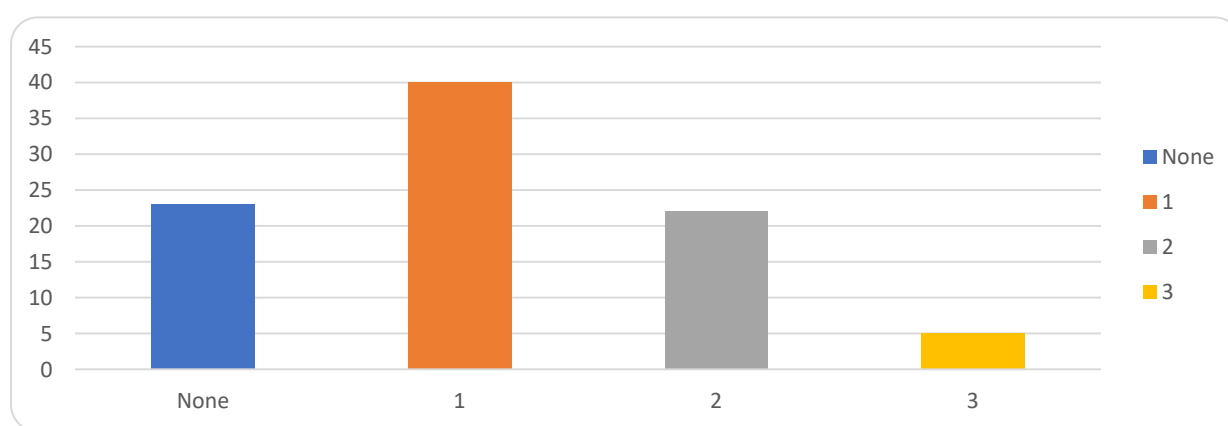
*Chart 2. The participants' age*



As mentioned in the section regarding coding (4.3.), only responses from speakers of English as their first language were contemplated in the analysis. In addition, five participants out of these 90 also had another mother tongue (Gujarati, Hebrew, Italian, Russian, Welsh), so bilingualism in its strictest sense (e.g. Bloomfield's 1933 definition in Section 2.1.) did not seem particularly common. Yet this kind of equal mastery of two languages was not as inexistent as the monolingual myth surrounding the UK would imply. Obviously, as English is an official language in many countries across the globe, a slight issue arose during the analysis: Are all the participants British? Because this was not thought of at the moment of creating the questionnaire, I will use 'British' when referring to the participants to denote a person 'studying in Britain and being immersed in British culture' rather than assuming they are of British nationality or of British descent.

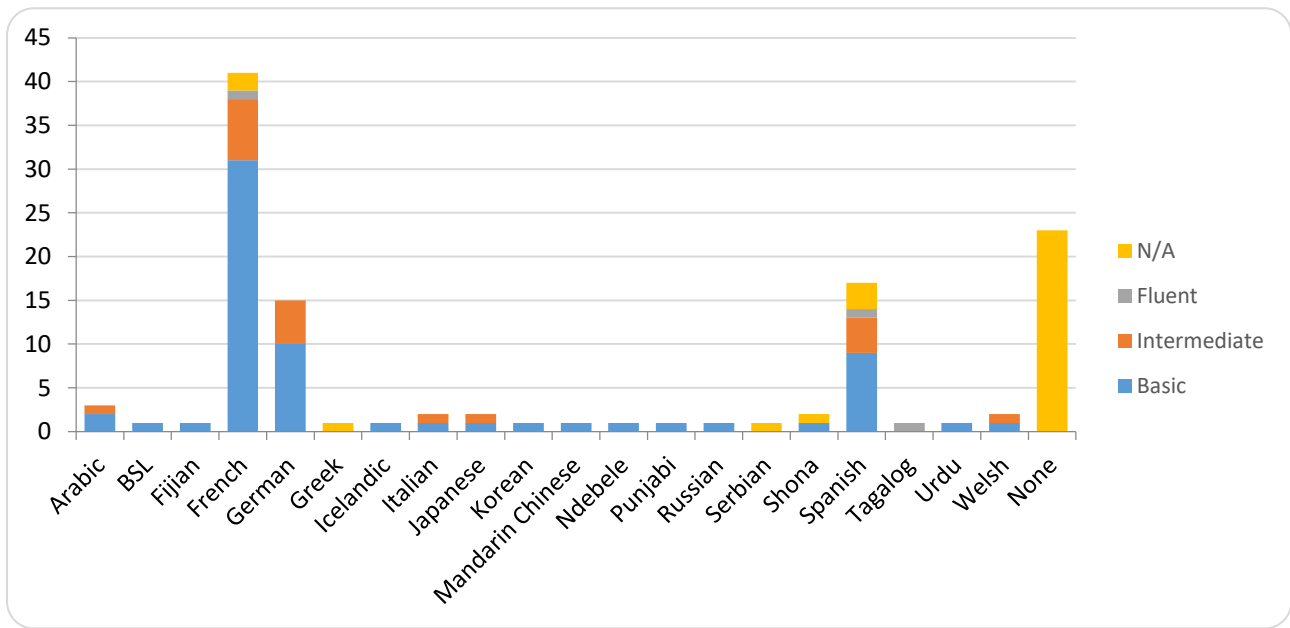
When it comes to competence in foreign languages, most people who took part in the study, 74%, had at least basic knowledge of one language beside English (as shown in Chart 3 below). As a whole, multilingualism in the restricted sense of being able to communicate in three or more languages proved to be the exception rather than the rule for the participants: 23 informants (26%) claimed they had no knowledge of foreign languages whatsoever, and 40 informants (44%) said they knew only one foreign language, the competence in which was often basic.

*Chart 3. Number of foreign languages spoken by each informant*



The level of competence for each language mentioned by the participants can be seen from Chart 4 below. Two answers related to competence in French, “GCSE C-level” and “CSE Grade 1”, were interpreted to denote intermediate level. French was by far the foreign language with the most speakers (46% of participants reported knowledge of the language), even if only a fifth of these could speak it on an intermediate or fluent level. Several people said they knew only “a bit of French” or “very basic French”, which is intriguing given that this language has most likely been learnt at school. Spanish was the second most spoken language with a fifth of the participants stating they have some competence in it. German came close, with 17% mentioning it, but none evaluating themselves as fluent speakers of the language.

*Chart 4. Foreign languages spoken by the participants and level of proficiency in each*



Apart from French, Spanish and German, the informants had very diverse linguistic backgrounds. Individual answers included some less commonly spoken languages such as British Sign Language (BSL), Icelandic, and Korean.

What is striking is that the majority estimated they had none or only ‘basic’ knowledge of a foreign language. It may be seen as surprising that most participants rated their language skills as basic or non-existent, knowing that anyone graduating from the British school system has had to study, as a minimum, one foreign language for three years (cf. Section 2.3.). Three years of formal language teaching is undeniably not long enough to guarantee mastery of a language, but to say that one does not speak *any* foreign language must be an understatement. Some participants might have underestimated their language proficiency, preferring to rate it as ‘basic’ or not answer at all. Could it be that the participants’ language attitudes explain their (perceived) low achievement in foreign languages? This question and the participants’ background will be further discussed in section 6, where the effect of different variables (e.g. gender) on attitudes will be contemplated more extensively.

What is more, only three out of the 90 participants asserted they were ‘fluent’ in a foreign language. One of the languages in question, Tagalog, is not an ordinary school subject, which indicates that the participant might have learnt the language in a Filipino linguistic community. Some individuals did have intermediate skills in a foreign or territorial language (Japanese, Welsh), but most had limited knowledge in the ‘rarer’ languages mentioned, e.g. Fijian, Ndebele, Urdu. Fluency in a foreign language also seemed to correlate with multilingualism: all of the participants who said they were fluent in a language also knew at least one more foreign language. One could speculate that the more confident the language speaker, the more interested they are in language learning in general.

## **5.2. Kashkin assignment**

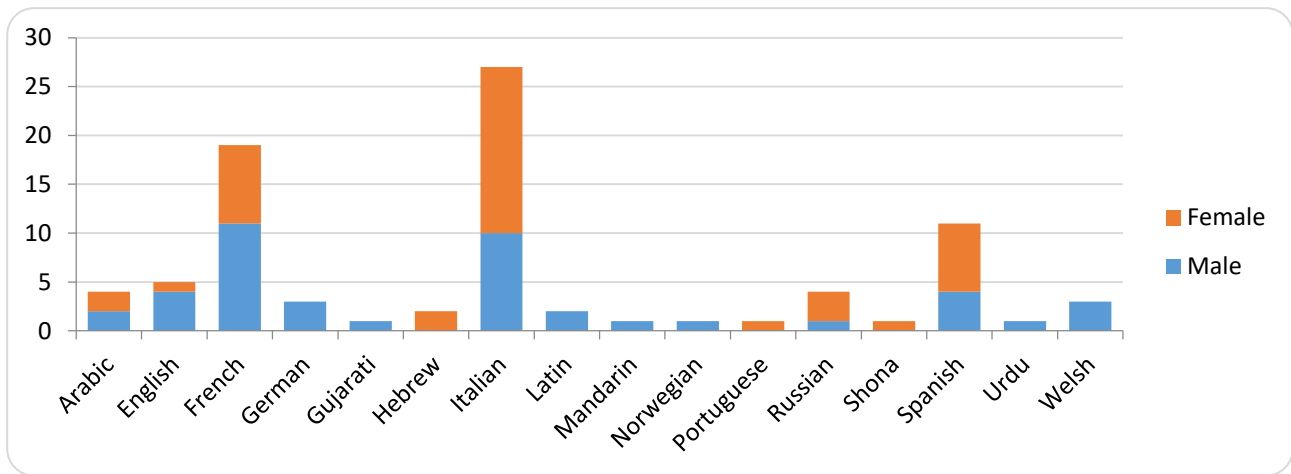
As mentioned previously, the assignment originally designed by Kashkin (2001) and replicated in this study consisted of completing sentences of the type “The most X language is \_\_\_\_\_”, where X is an adjective. The sentences were to be filled with a language of the participant’s choice. The aim was to find out about the informants’ thoughts on, for instance, the most beautiful, difficult, or serious language, and hence find out about attitudes to specific languages.

The answers to each sentence-completion question will be analysed one question at a time in the following subsections. Frequencies of answers will be displayed both in total and with regard to gender. I will illustrate the findings with the help of charts that list the answers given by the participants in alphabetical order. Furthermore, results will be compared with those from the relevant studies (Kashkin 2001; Kansikas 2002).

### 5.2.1. The most beautiful language

To begin with, the participants were asked to complete the sentence “The most beautiful language is \_\_\_\_\_” with any language of their choice. The answers to this question are displayed in the chart below (Chart 5), excluding two answers that contained more than one language (“Hindi or Swahili”, “Italian/French”).

*Chart 5. The most beautiful language*



Intriguingly, only five participants (c. 6%) thought their own mother tongue, English, was the most beautiful language. Overall, Italian was considered the most beautiful language (30%), followed by French (21%). Spanish was the third most popular answer, although considerably fewer people mentioned it, 12% of all participants. All things considered, the most beautiful language for the participants was usually a Romance language: French, Italian, Latin, Portuguese, and Spanish collected two thirds of the voices. Broadly speaking, there may be two main explications to this phenomenon: either Romance languages sound particularly pleasing to Brits as compared to other languages, or speakers of Romance languages receive positive evaluations from Brits, which affects their view of the language. This issue will be further discussed in Section 6.

The main difference between male and female participants was that most of the male informants' answers went for French (11 mentions), whereas female informants clearly favoured

Italian over French (17 and 8 voices respectively). Similarly to the male informants in Kansikas (2002), men in this study were more numerous in regarding their mother tongue as the most beautiful language than women. Male participants were also more likely to mention a non-European language, such as Gujarati or Urdu. A bold claim would be that men are interested in more ‘exotic’ languages than women. Another possibility is that these responses were influenced by other factors than gender.

As a whole, when comparing these results to those from Kashkin (2001) and Kansikas (2002), the main difference is that Italian did not make it to the most beautiful language in either Russia or Finland, while it was clearly the preferred answer for Brits. French, however, was a popular answer in all three countries – perhaps it is recognised as an aesthetically pleasing language internationally. Interestingly, English was regarded as the most beautiful language by far more Finns and Russians than by English citizens themselves. It seems that Brits were not as attracted to their own mother tongue as to Romance languages. In Russia and Finland, the participants’ native languages, Russian and Finnish, were the second most common answer, while Brits seemed more cautious in electing English as the most beautiful language.

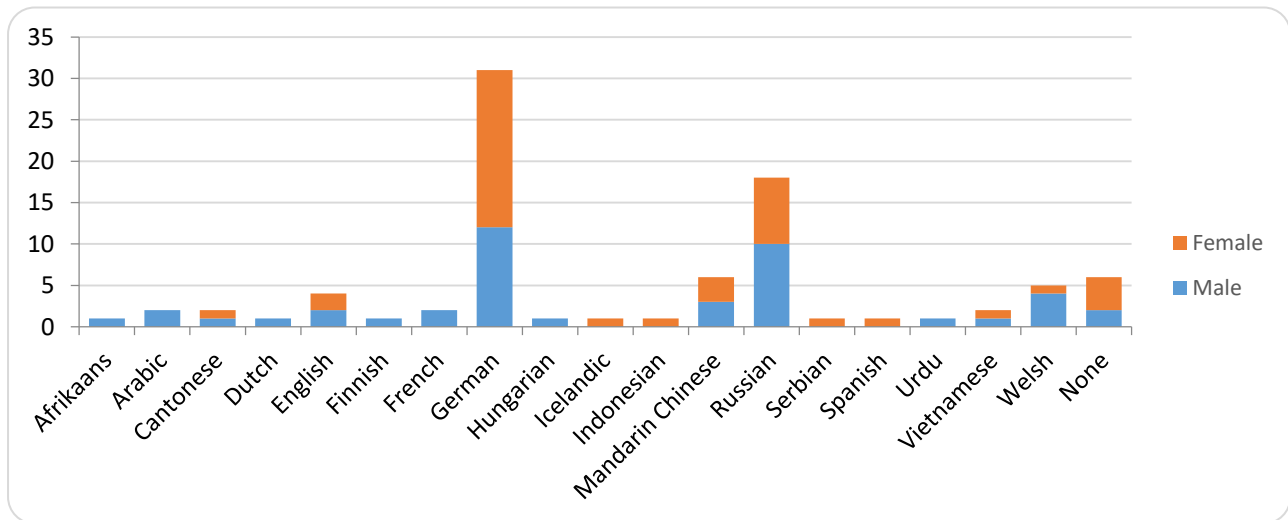
### **5.2.2. The ugliest language**

As concerns the ugliest language, two answers, “Baltic languages” and “Norse languages”, had to be discarded due to their vagueness. In total, 34% of participants thought German was the ugliest and a little less, 20%, opted for Russian. German and Russian were regarded as the ugliest languages rather evenly amongst both male and female participants. There was more versatility in other answers, although Mandarin Chinese and Welsh also collected a handful of voices each.

In addition, it is worth pointing out that a few informants considered their own native language the ugliest – familiarity is thus not always an attractive feature. However, two of these

answers further specified a variety of English: “Liverpudlian” and “American” were seen as the least appealing for these participants.

*Chart 6. The ugliest language*



Worth mentioning is also the fact that six students answered “none” or left the answer field blank, suggesting that in their opinion there is no such thing as an ugly language. This can be seen as proof of positive attitudes towards different languages, because these participants did not want to describe a language with the negative term ‘ugly’.

The findings were fairly similar to those by Kashkin (2001) and Kansikas (2002): both Russians and Finns regarded German as the ugliest or second ugliest language. Obviously, Russians did not consider their own first language the ugliest. For the Finns, Russian was a more popular answer than German, which may be due to historical factors and the difficult relationship between Finland and Russia (Kansikas 2002).

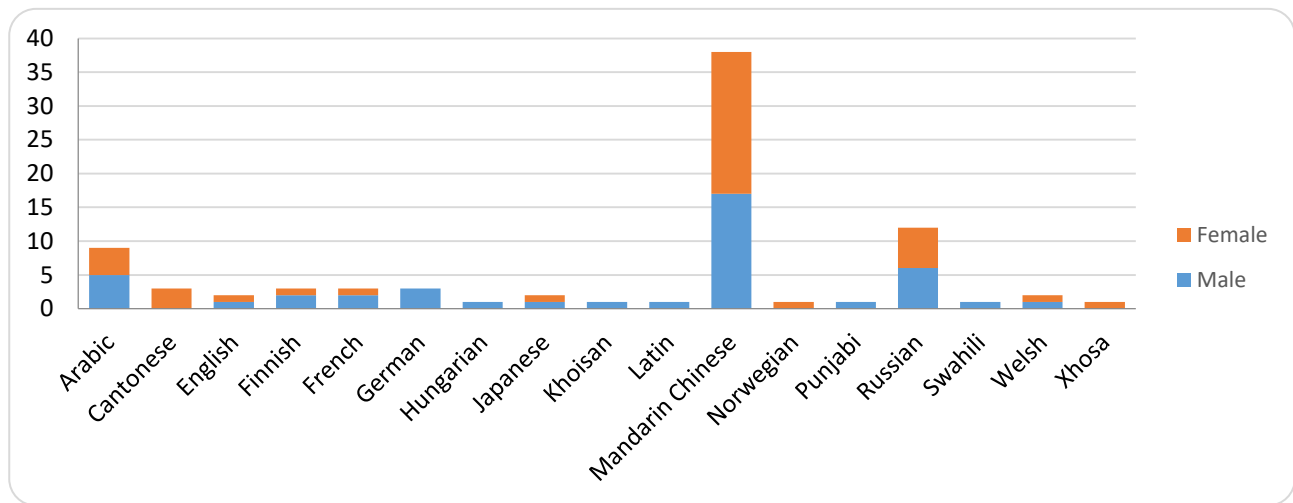
### 5.2.3. The most difficult language

The most popular answers in the difficulty section were, in order, Mandarin Chinese (42%), Russian (13%), and Arabic (10%). At first sight, these languages share at least one characteristic: they have a different writing system from English. Mandarin was judged the most difficult language



by far, by almost half of the participants, regardless of gender. This may be due to both the spelling and the pronunciation system based on tones. In addition to spelling, the word ‘difficult’ seems to have been interpreted by most as a challenging grammar (e.g. Finnish and Hungarian) or phonology (e.g. ‘click’ languages Khoisan and Xhosa). Only two participants regarded their mother tongue English as the most complicated language.

*Chart 7. The most difficult language*



Unfortunately, four answers had to be omitted from the chart, as they mentioned multiple languages: “Russian or Greek”, “Hungarian or Finnish”, “German/Russian/Chinese/Japanese”, “African tribal languages that have a different construction than many European ones”. These answers do, however, correlate with the rest of the responses: languages with a differing grammar, phonology, or spelling from English were the most common answers.

(Mandarin) Chinese was also the most difficult language in Russians’ opinion (Kashkin, 2001) and the second-most difficult after Russian for Finnish informants (Kansikas, 2002). In Russia, Japanese and interestingly Russian were the subsequent most difficult languages (ibid.). Finns, on the other hand, listed French as the third most difficult language, which may be due to both a different pronunciation and a different spelling logic from Finnish. The French and English language share the fact that letter-to-phoneme correspondence varies, which, together with close

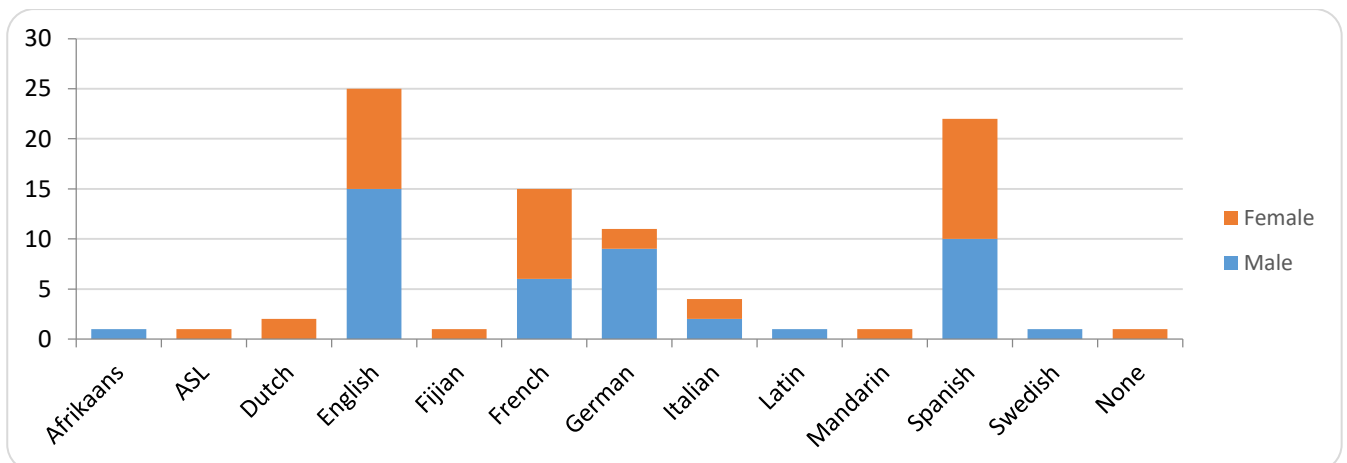
ties to Latin and other Indo-European languages, are probably the reasons why French was not considered that difficult for Brits.

#### 5.2.4. The easiest language

As concerns the easiest language, three answers were left out from the chart (Chart 8) because they did not consist of one specific language but several: “Italian/French”, “French/Spanish”, and “any Romance language”. These answers are, however, in accordance with those of the other participants.

Indeed, Romance languages, such as Spanish, French, and Italian, were some of the most popular answers for the easiest language. However, it was the participants’ first language English that was the primary choice, backed up by nearly 28% of the informants. For obvious reasons, it could be expected that English would be seen as the easiest language for its native speakers. In addition, among the most popular choices were Indo-European languages (e.g. French and German), which may be easy to English speakers, as they belong to the same language family.

*Chart 8. The easiest language*



In decreasing order, the easiest languages for the informants after English were Spanish (24%), French (17%), German (12%), and Italian (4%). German was considered the easiest mostly

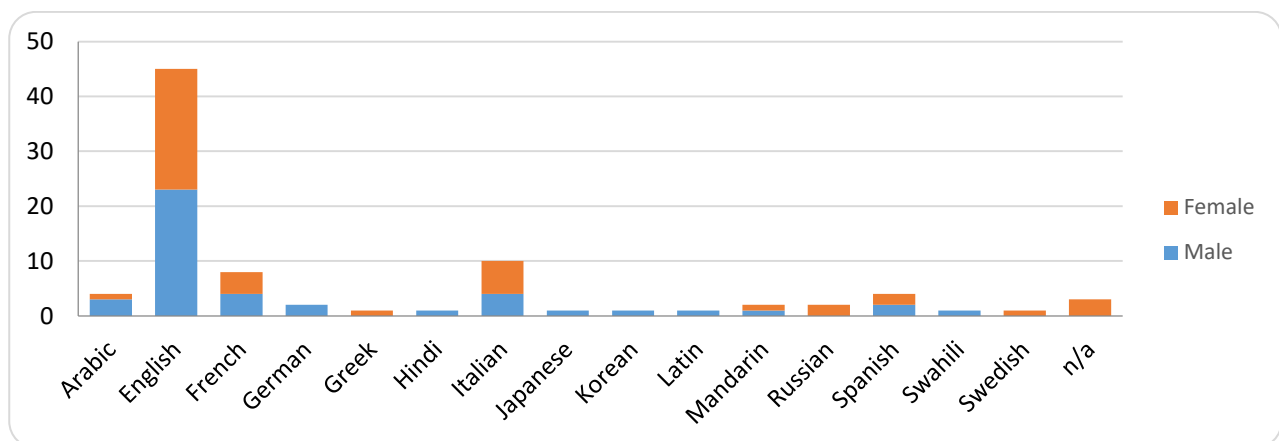
by male participants, while other answers did not show notable differences between the genders. Some of the remaining individuals opted for non-European languages, such as Afrikaans, Fijian, and interestingly, Mandarin, despite it being regarded as the most difficult language by a large number of participants in the study (see 5.2.3.).

In Kashkin's (2001) study, Russian informants similarly found their own first language the easiest, then English, while in Kansikas' (2002) study, the Finnish students opted for English before Finnish. The prominence of English in all these findings may be explained in terms of its familiarity, either as a first language or due to its global expansion – the more accustomed one is to a language, the easier it is considered.

### 5.2.5. The richest language

As concerns the richest language, it was English, the participants' mother tongue, which collected the most answers, with 50% of the participants mentioning it. Two of these answers also specified which variety of English was the richest: according to one, American English, and for the other, British English. Similarly, informants in Kashkin's (2001) study overwhelmingly opted for their mother tongue (Russian) as the richest language. Finns, in contrast, were seemingly more modest and mentioned English and French more often than their mother tongue Finnish (Kansikas, 2002).

*Chart 9. The richest language*



After English, only French (9%) and Italian (11%) gathered over 5 responses, which resembles the results for the question on the most beautiful language (discussed in section 5.2.1.), hence showing that “beautiful” and “rich” may be considered synonyms or otherwise related. Again, Italian took the lead from French, which may be due to French being too close an acquaintance to Brits. The remaining answers were rather divided: they included, for example, Arabic, Greek, and Korean.

One of the answers to the question on the richest language was classified as ambiguous and was not included in the chart, as the informant did not mention a particular language variety but said “one that is beautifully/eloquently phrased”. Another answer was also discarded, as it included two languages: “Russian/Latin”.

A small number of participants (c. 3%) did not mention any language. It may be that they did not think any language is richer than the other, or they did not understand what a ‘rich’ language is. It is possible that some thought of ‘rich’ in a literal sense, a language whose speakers are the wealthiest.

### **5.2.6. The poorest language**

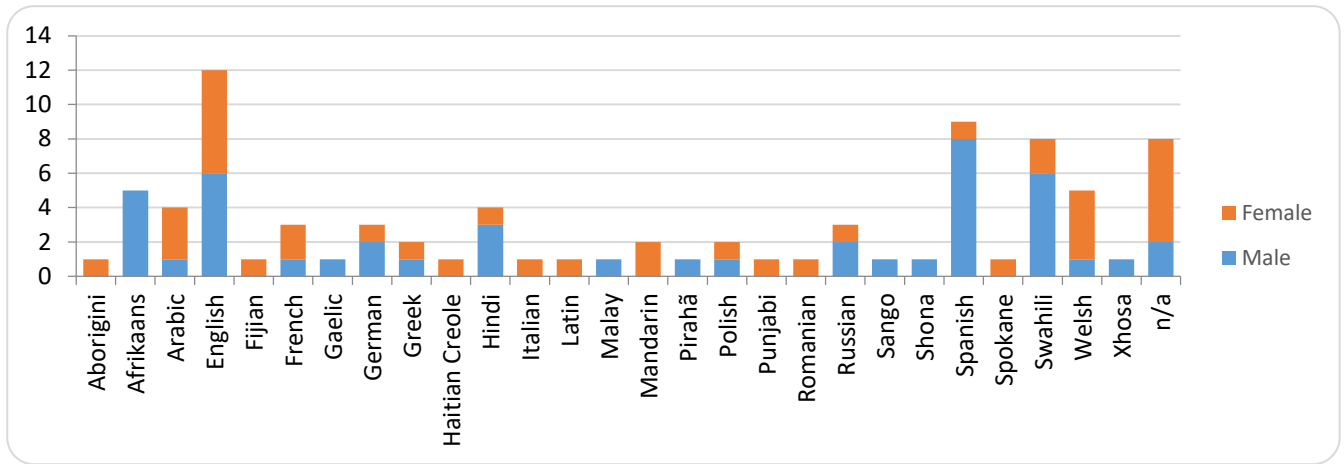
The range of languages that the informants stated for the question on the poorest language was extremely wide and consisted of fairly rare languages as well. This tells us about rather subjective opinions when it comes to what a ‘poor’ language is.

Three of the answers to this question were left out from the chart. They were classified as ambiguous, as they did not mention a particular language but said “one that is incoherent”, “Tribal”, and “African”. The fourth, “Twi”, referred to an African dialect rather than a language. Swahili was mentioned by eight people and Afrikaans by five, while some participants brought up languages Sango, Shona, and Xhosa. All these aforementioned answers highlight that the poorest languages, for a number of participants, originate from Africa. Again, as stated in the previous subsection, it is

possible that the adjectives ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ were associated with literal wealth and poverty.

‘Poorness’ may also be attributed to a language because of lack of knowledge about it.

*Chart 10. The poorest language*



Interestingly, it was English that received the most votes as the poorest individual language, even if it was also the leading answer when it came to the richest language. It may be that for some native speakers, it is more difficult to perceive the richness of one’s own language. Spanish, which was also commonly considered the easiest language (see section 5.2.4.), came second in the ‘poorest language’ section. It seems like there was some overlap between the alleged poorest and easiest languages.

As concerns gender differences, it must be noted that the majority of those who thought Spanish or an African language (e.g. Afrikaans, Swahili) was the poorest language were male, while Welsh was clearly more common an answer among female participants. Two participants also specified the variety of the language that they regarded was the poorest: “American English” and “Ancient Greek”.

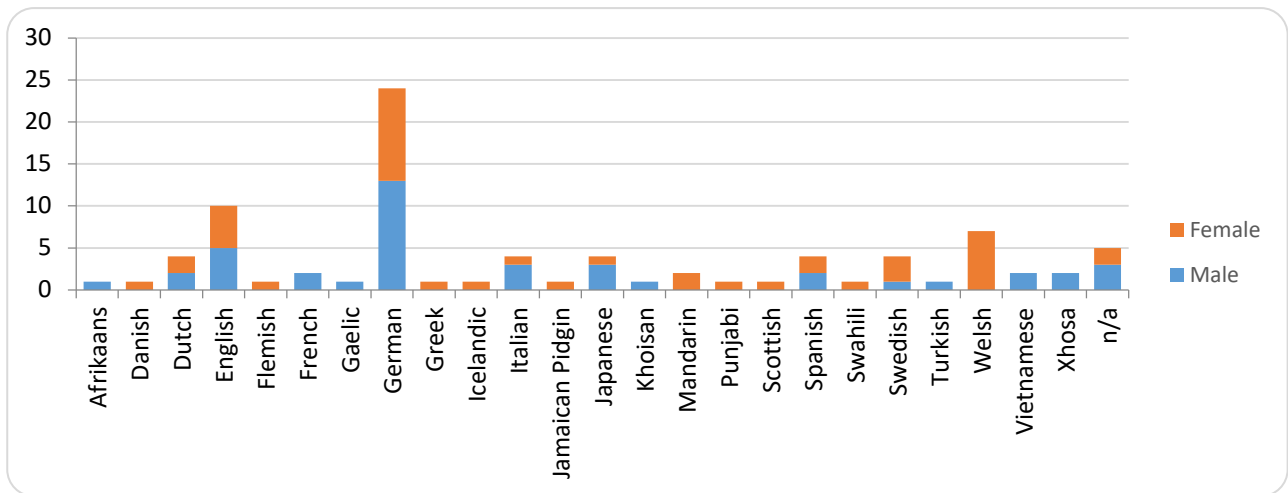
Approximately 7% of the answers were left blank or stated “none”, mostly by female participants, probably because they thought there is no such a thing as a ‘poor’ language, or because they did not understand the concept. This could point towards more positive attitudes to foreign languages among women than men. In Kashkin’s (2001) Russian study, the majority answered they

did not know which language is the poorest. For Kansikas' (2002) Finnish informants, the poorest languages were those of Finland's neighbouring countries: Swedish, Estonian, and Russian. Hence, there is seemingly no universal definition or stereotype of what a poor language is.

### 5.2.7. The funniest language

Next came the question on the funniest language. Here as in the previous subsection, responses were fairly varied, even if German was clearly deemed the funniest language by men and women alike. German was the choice of a little over a fourth of the informants (27%), while the other participants were less unanimous. English and Welsh were the only other languages that got over five votes. Again, two participants specified the variety of English they considered the funniest: "American English" and "(northern dialects of) English".

*Chart 11. The funniest language*



African language Xhosa was mentioned by two people. This language is known for its phonology, and more particularly, click consonants. Click consonants probably sound amusing to Brits because they are not used to hearing them.

Three answers were discarded, as one consisted of two languages, "Italian or English", another did not point towards a specific language ("Creole"), and the third consisted of a language

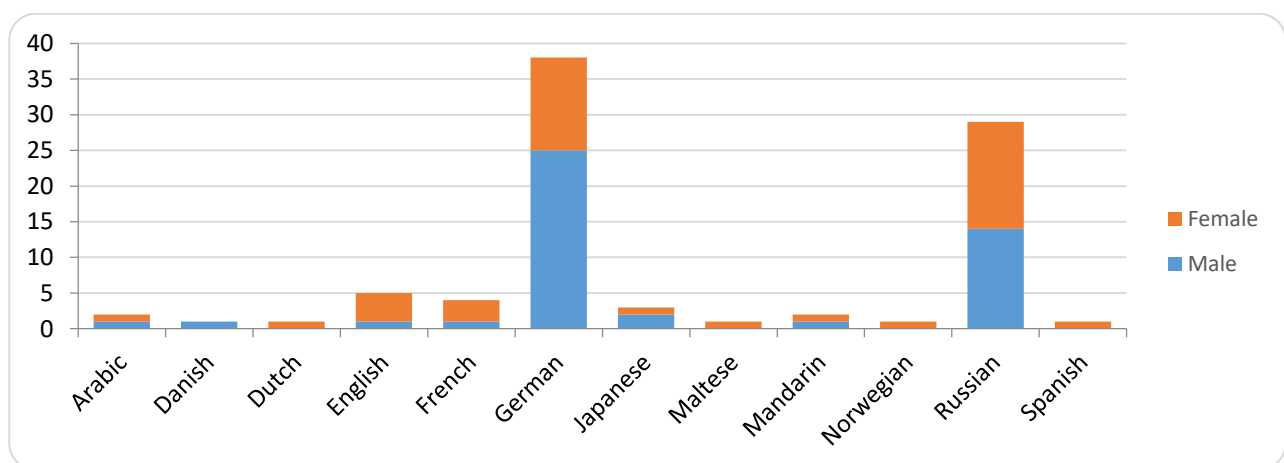
family, Khoisan, certainly also due to the click consonants common in the languages pertaining to it. Three people decided not to answer this question.

Interestingly, German, the language that sounded the funniest to Brits was not that funny to Finns or Russians (cf. Kashkin, 2001; Kansikas, 2002). For Russians, Chinese and Japanese were the funniest, while Finns' answers were rather divided, with the Estonian, Finnish, and English languages leading (ibid.). One can perceive here that the funniness of a language is not a shared thought all over the world. Humour is not a universal language, hence people of different cultural or linguistic backgrounds are amused by different languages.

### 5.2.8. The most serious language

Answers to the question about the most serious language were not as divided as those to the earlier two questions, as can be seen from Chart 12 below. A substantial majority regarded German and Russian as the most serious languages with 42% and 32% of responses respectively. Paradoxically, German proved not only to be perceived as the funniest but also the most serious language. A straightforward explanation might be that the seriousness of the language makes it sound humorous.

*Chart 12. The most serious language*



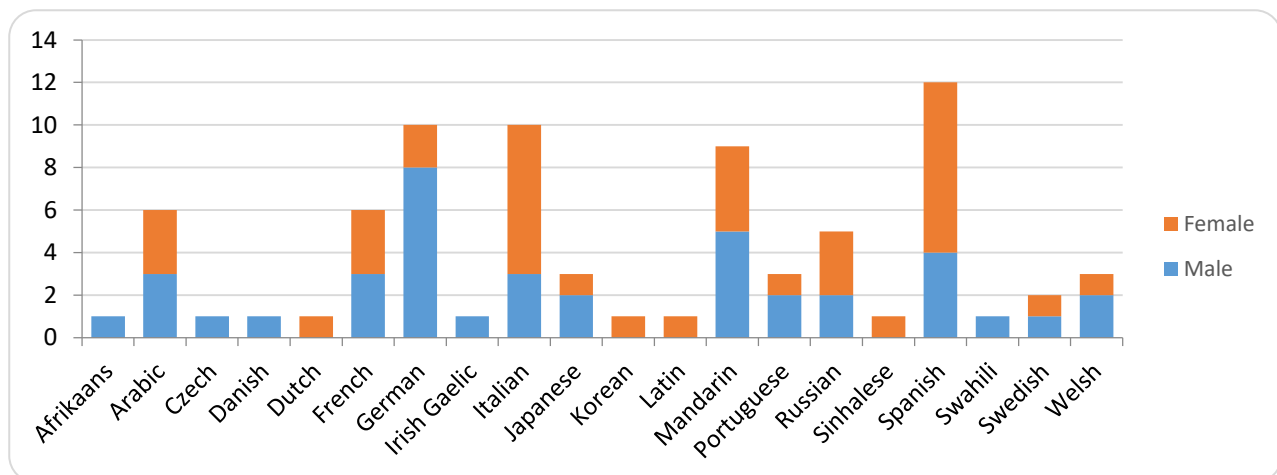
German was judged the most serious by slightly more male than female participants, while English and French were more popular among female participants. One answer, “Russian or German”, was not included in the chart but it confirms that these are popularly deemed the most serious languages. The seriousness of the languages may be related to the perceived seriousness of its speakers. Similar findings were reported in Kashkin (2001) and Kansikas (2002), although the English language also made it to the top three for both Finns and Russians. Kansikas (ibid., 71) argues this may be due to English being used in formal and official international contexts.

Other answers to this question in the present study included, for example, English, French, and Japanese. It is difficult to say why these individual languages were considered serious by the British participants, but linguistic factors, such as intonation, together with cultural associations may play a significant role in people’s opinions.

### 5.2.9. The language I would like to learn

The sentence-completion task was concluded with a question on which language the subject would like to learn. The languages evoked by the participants were relatively diverse, even if several languages proved to be highly favoured over others (see Chart 13).

*Chart 13. The language I would like to learn*





Out of the four languages that people most wanted to learn, one was Asian – Mandarin Chinese – while the others were well-known Indo-European languages – Spanish, Italian, and German. Unsurprisingly, today’s trending language, Spanish, came first with 13% of the participants wanting to learn it. As acknowledged by Kansikas (2002), the prominence of the language in popular music and media may well play a role in language learning interests. Women were more attracted to learning Spanish and Italian, whereas men seemed to have a greater preference for German. All in all, there was interest in learning not only major world languages (e.g. Arabic, Mandarin) but also languages with fewer speakers (e.g. Welsh, Swedish) which possibly held importance in the informants’ personal life rather than for employment prospects.

Finnish students in Kansikas (2002) had a similar preference to Brits for learning Spanish and Italian, but also French. Russians in Kashkin (2001), on the other hand, were most interested in learning English and then French. Finns probably did not mention English because upper secondary students have studied the language for various years and probably feel like they know enough of it. French might have been more popular among Russian and Finnish informants, because it is not as commonly studied as in the UK, where it is the first foreign language. Because many people are already acquainted to French in the UK, it is not the first choice when asked what language one would like to learn. In addition, there might partly be rival attitudes between neighbouring countries, such as the Finnish attitudes to Swedish and Russian seen in Kansikas (2002).

As concerns invalid answers, there were ten responses which listed various languages and hence do not appear in the chart above: two people wrote “Arabic or Mandarin”, one opted for “Spanish or Mandarin”, another for both “Italian and Chinese”, one elected “Punjabi, Spanish”, another “Korean or Italian” and four would have liked to learn even more languages: “German, Spanish, Mandarin, Russian”, “German, Italian, Mandarin”, “French, Nepalese, Russian”, “German, Spanish, Italian”. This sort of abundance in the responses and difficulty naming just one language indicates that a number of participants had a pronounced interest in learning languages, and not only

those languages regarded as most ‘useful’ for Britain (see British Council’s “Languages for the Future” report, 2017). Language learning thus seemed to be valued for more than just goal-oriented reasons.

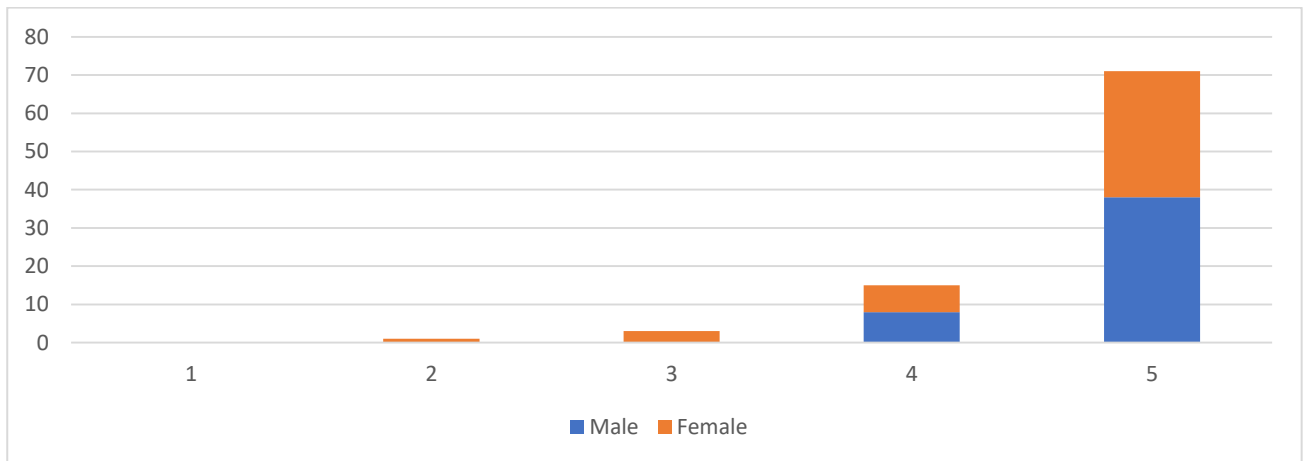
### **5.3. Attitudinal and motivational statements**

The attitudinal and motivational statements from the third part of the questionnaire were rearranged into thematic groups for the analysis: statements concerning attitudes towards English as a lingua franca (5.3.1.), those concerning motivation to learn foreign languages (5.3.2.), and those depicting attitudes towards foreign languages and their speakers (5.3.3.). The original order of the statements may be seen from the questionnaire (see Appendix). Again, the overall frequencies as well as differences between male and female answers will be displayed via charts. As mentioned earlier, the statements were assessed on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and answers will be shown accordingly in the charts. Similarities to and differences from previous research will also be pointed out.

#### **5.3.1. Attitudes towards English as a lingua franca**

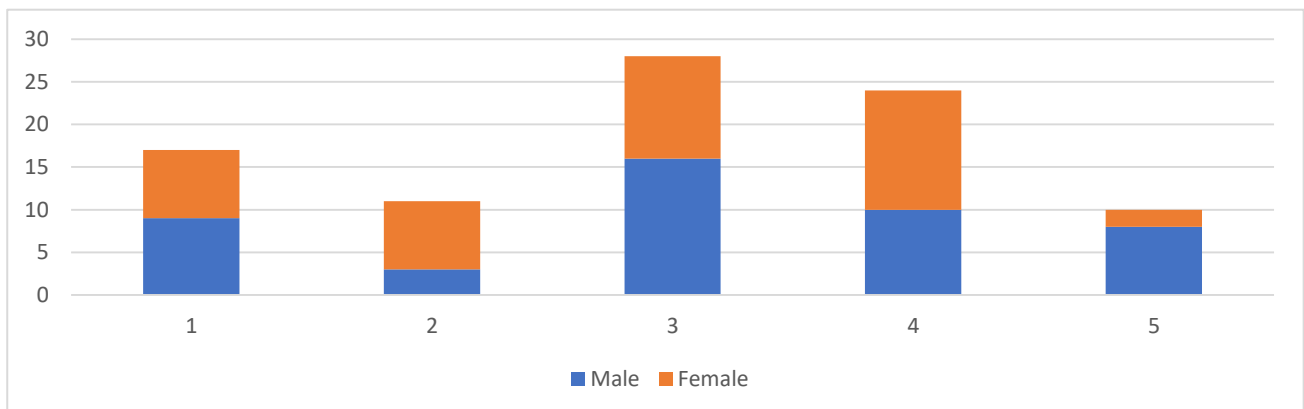
This subsection will present the results for the statements concerning the role of English, the participants’ mother tongue, as a lingua franca or international language. The answers to the first such statement, “English is a useful tool for international communication”, show that views of English as a lingua franca are mostly very positive: it was considered a useful tool for international communication by approximately 96% of the informants, and not one totally disagreed (see Chart 14). There were no major differences between male and female participants’ answers, although it may be noted that the few individuals who “somewhat disagreed” or “neither disagreed nor agreed” were all women.

*Chart 14. English is a useful tool for international communication*



A lingua franca is arguably always useful, and more so if it is one's own native language, as one does not necessarily need to learn foreign languages. Nevertheless, British students also acknowledged the possible threat imposed on other languages by the dominant role of English. A significant part of the students, 38%, somewhat or totally agreed with the statement "The spread of English is a threat to other languages", while almost a third were undecided (Chart 15).

*Chart 15. The spread of English is a threat to other languages*



Here, differences between the genders were more pronounced: men were more likely to agree strongly with the statement, while women were more hesitant as they answered "somewhat agree/disagree" more often than the men. It is interesting to note that native English-speakers may see English as a useful medium for international communication but also simultaneously understand

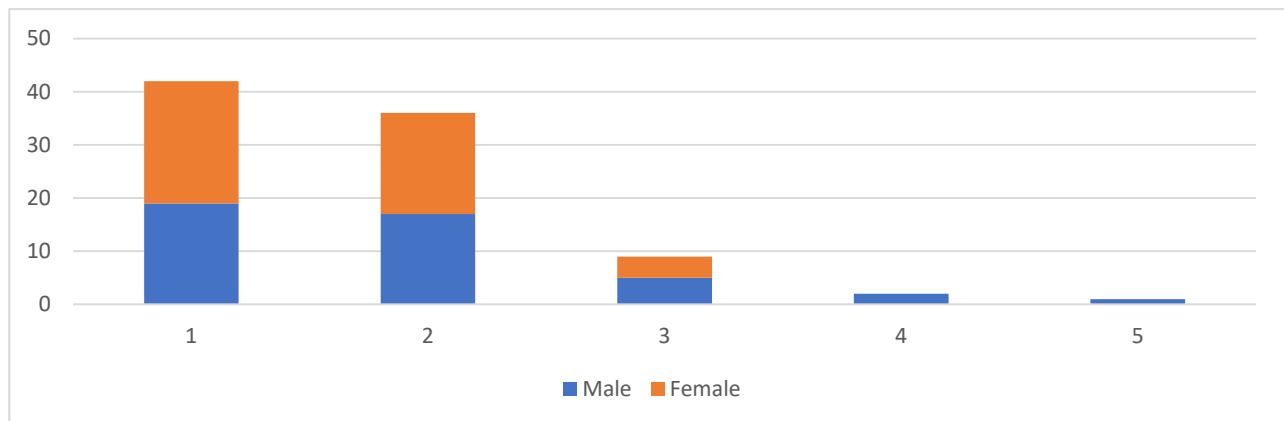
the possible menace inflicted on other languages. Many non-native speakers may be less critical of the influence of English on other languages.

### 5.3.2. Motivation to learn foreign languages

The attitudinal statements and answers presented in this subsection relate to the informants' attitudes and motivation towards foreign language learning. Overall, the participants' language learning attitudes proved to be rather positive judging from the responses to these statements.

Most responses (87%) partly or completely disagreed with the statement “Learning a foreign language is useless, because English is spoken by most people” (Chart 16). Anglocentric views seemed relatively rare, as only a handful of participants (3%) considered learning other languages somewhat or totally useless. It seems that the debatable fact “English is spoken by most people” did not make language learning totally useless in the majority's opinion.

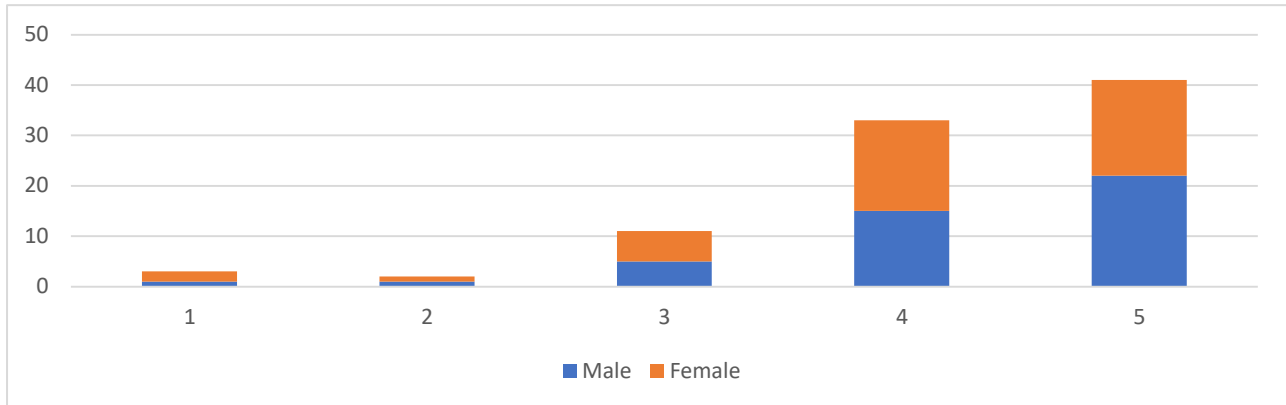
*Chart 16. Learning a foreign language is useless, because English is spoken by most people*



While men and women seemed to share similar thoughts on the matter, it is interesting to note that the only informants to agree with the statement “Learning a foreign language is useless, because English is spoken by most people” were male. This might support Taylor and Marsden's (2014, 902) claim that male students are more likely to have negative attitudes towards language learning than females, but the target group is too limited in order to make generalisations.

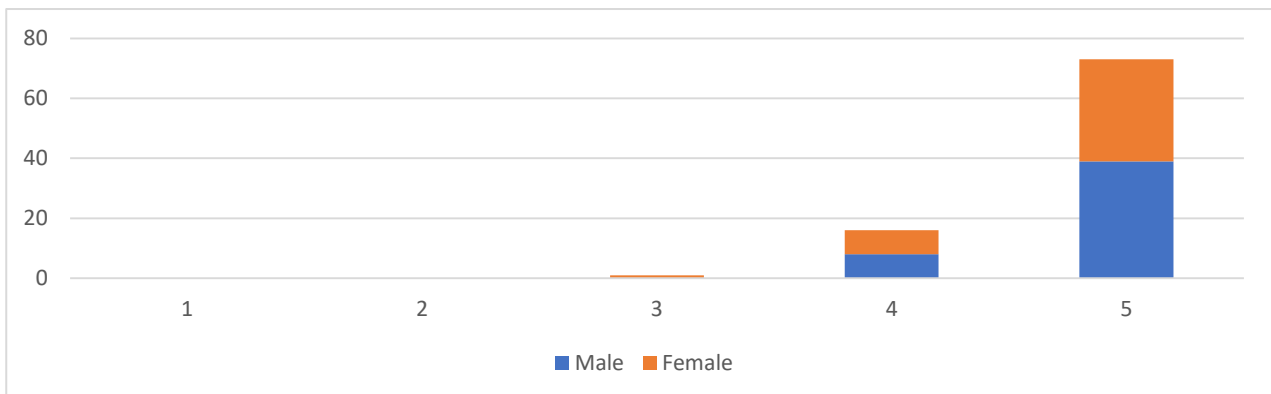
Two statements related indirectly to language learning motivation, as they referred to the effect of language skills on finding employment, first in the participants' home country (Chart 17) and then abroad (Chart 18). There were no major differences between the male and female participants' views on either of the statements.

*Chart 17. Learning a foreign language would improve my employability in the UK*



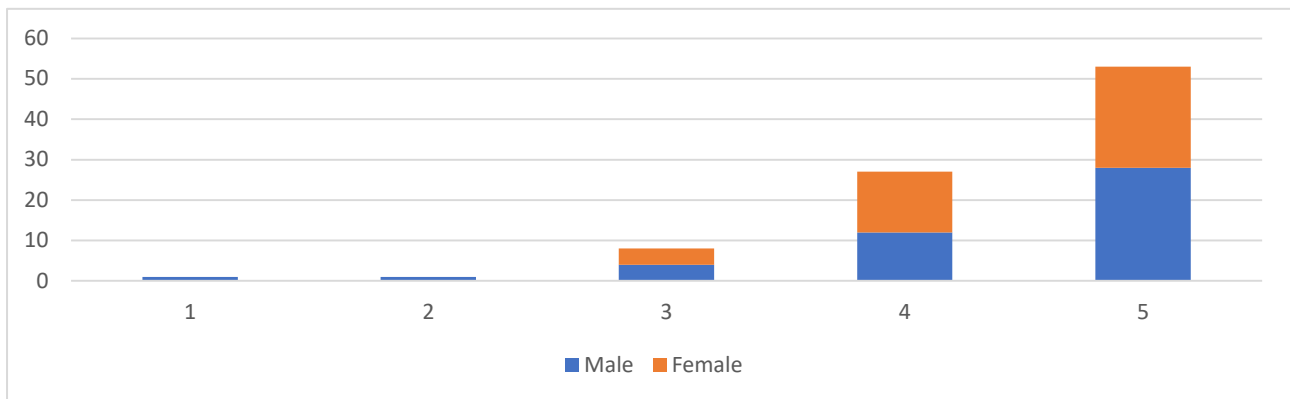
The majority, 81%, strongly agreed that foreign language skills would improve their employability *abroad*, but only 46% strongly agreed this would be the case in the UK. It can thus be argued that some participants had narrow career-relevance expectations, as they viewed foreign languages as useful mainly when working abroad. Nevertheless, most informants (82%) agreed that learning a foreign language would enhance their work prospects in the UK at least to a certain extent.

*Chart 18. Learning a foreign language would improve my employability abroad*



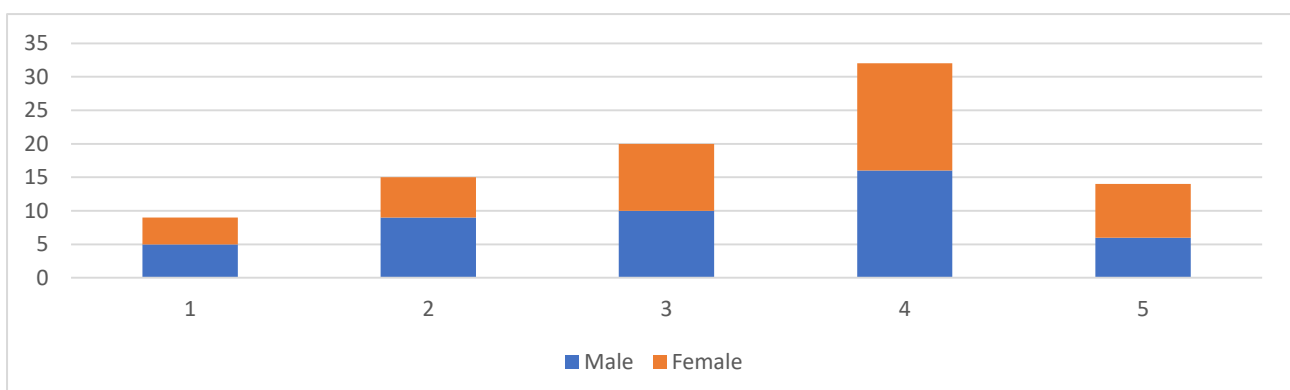
Participants were subsequently asked if they thought language learning would help them learn about other cultures. Here, most of the informants somewhat or strongly agreed (89%), as can be seen from Chart 19 below. As a consequence, language learning was more clearly linked to cultural enrichment than to better employment prospects within the UK. Only two male informants somewhat or totally disagreed on the matter.

*Chart 19. Learning a foreign language would help me learn about other cultures*



As concerns previous experiences of learning a foreign language, answers were rather divided. Chart 20 below shows the polarisation of the answers: roughly half of the participants (51%) had had at least somewhat positive experiences of learning a foreign language, while the other half were either not sure (22%) or had had negative experiences (27%). Again, there were no remarkable differences between men and women, even if slightly more women totally agreed and slightly more men somewhat or totally disagreed.

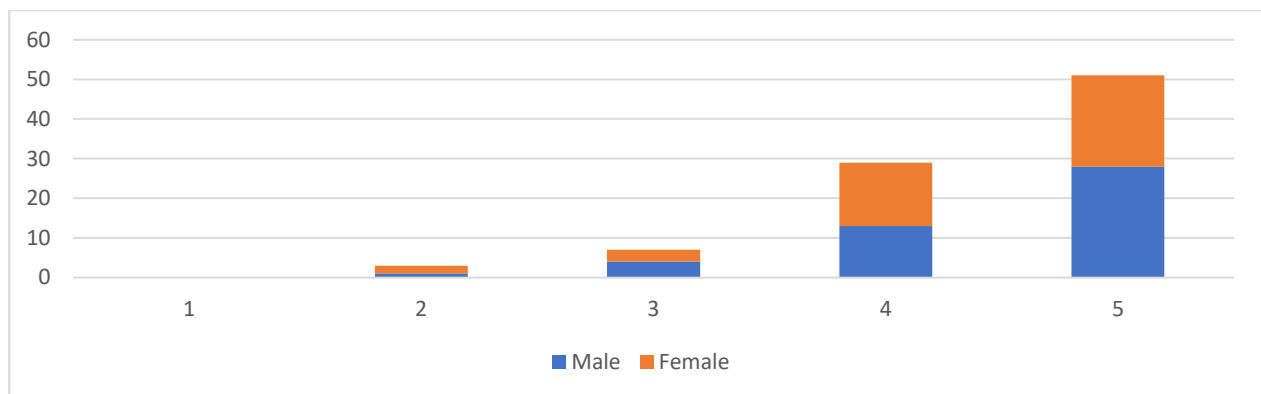
*Chart 20. I have positive experiences of learning a foreign language*



The fact that 10% of the informants strongly disagreed with the statement “I have positive experiences of learning a foreign language”, suggesting they have never enjoyed language learning at school or outside it, is interesting. It must also be pointed out that only 16% totally agreed with the statement. One cannot but wonder whether the negative experiences are due to teaching methods or the participants’ own lack of motivation. I will return to this issue in the Discussion (Section 6).

The last statement relating to language learning was formulated as “When pursuing a political career, it is useful to know more than one language” and the answers to it are displayed in Chart 21 below. Here as with the other career-related statements (Charts 17 and 18), the majority of informants believed languages would be useful in this work context: 32% somewhat agreed and 57% strongly agreed that it would be beneficial to know a foreign language when pursuing a political career.

*Chart 21. When pursuing a political career, it is useful to know more than one language*



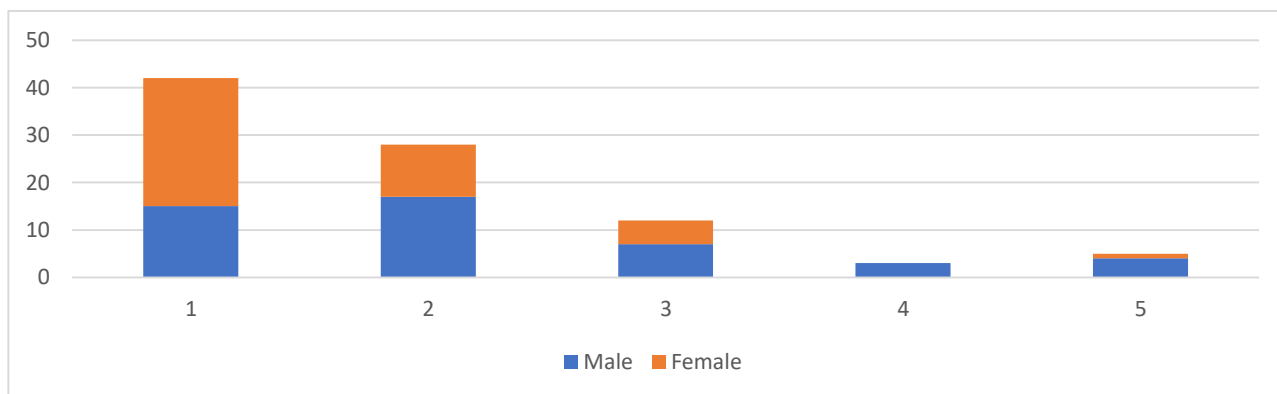
Women seemed slightly less decided, as they more often “somewhat” agreed or disagreed, while men more often “totally” agreed that multilingualism is useful when pursuing a political career. Hence, while men showed more negative responses to some of the statements above, they had also stronger positive attitudes to language learning than the female participants.

### 5.3.3. Attitudes towards foreign languages and their speakers

Finally, four statements were directly concerned with attitudes towards foreign languages and their speakers. Some statements purposely took a stance that could be reflective of linguistic imperialism (cf. section 2.4.) in order to assess the participants' attitudes.

First, informants had to evaluate their view on the statement “Most other languages are not useful” (see Chart 22). While most people (78%) disagreed with this assertion, five people strongly agreed and three somewhat agreed. It seems that this statement raised strong opinions, since there were relatively more people strongly agreeing or strongly disagreeing than those with more moderate views. Intriguingly, more women than men strongly disagreed, while it was mostly men (7 out of 8 participants) who strongly or partly agreed. Based on this, men would have more negative attitudes concerning the relevance of foreign languages than women.

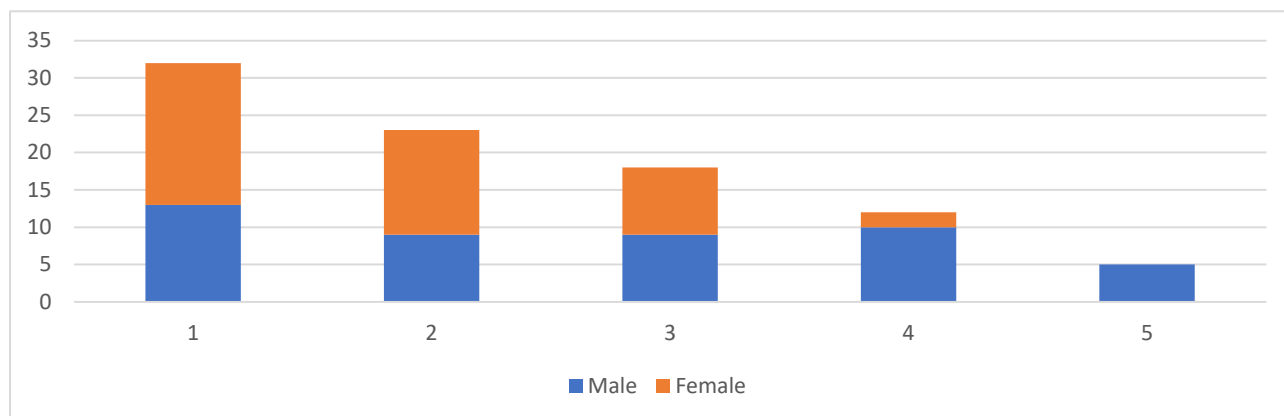
*Chart 22. Most other languages are not useful*



The subsequent statements inquired about attitudes towards *speakers* of foreign languages. Most informants did not think foreigners should aim to speak English with a native-speaker accent (Chart 23), but there were five who strongly agreed with this claim and 13% who partly agreed.



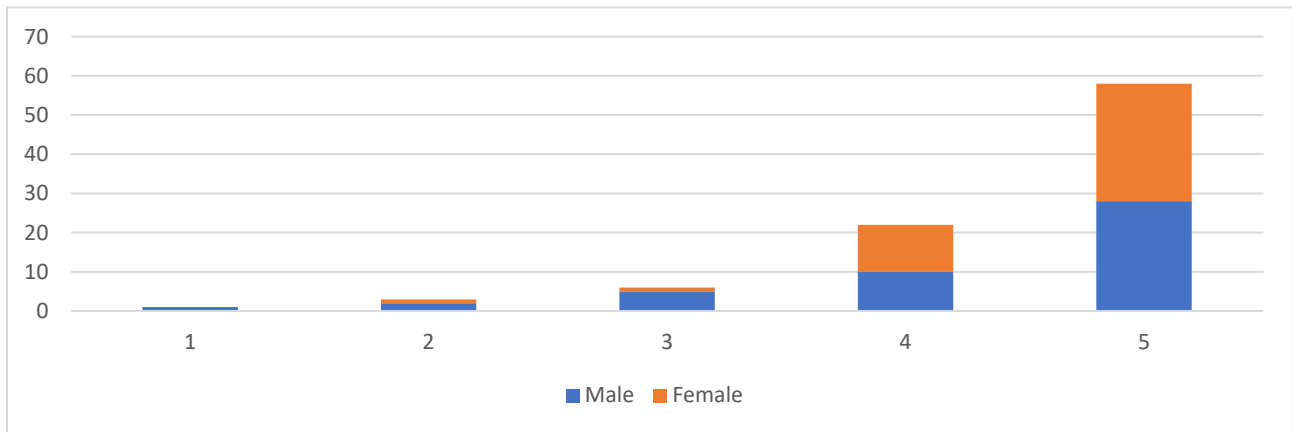
*Chart 23. Foreigners should aim to speak English with a British (or other native speaker) accent*



Consequently, a considerable minority believed that there is a standard form of English that people should aim for. This indicates the continuing presence of prescriptive attitudes in some people's minds. As can be observed from the chart, it was mainly male informants who maintained that foreigners should have a native speaker accent as their goal. Female informants, on the other hand, were more numerous to strongly or partly disagree with the statement. Therefore, it could be argued that women are more tolerant of non-native accents.

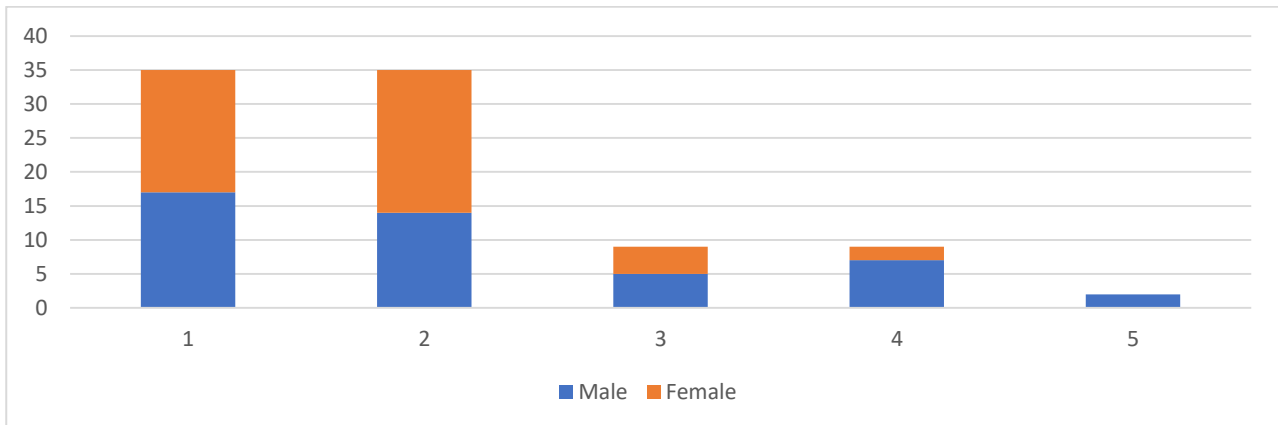
More positive attitudes were indicated in the responses to the following assertion, "When I hear someone speaking a foreign language, I wish I could speak it like them" (see Chart 24). A remarkable majority, 89%, wished they could speak the foreign language like the person speaking it, meaning they would have a positive reaction upon hearing someone speak a foreign language. The answers to this statement underline that most of the informants regard knowledge of another language as something worth striving for and that they have a generally positive attitude towards foreign languages. As for the previous statement, women displayed slightly less negative attitudes than men.

*Chart 24. When I hear someone speaking a foreign language, I wish I could speak it like them*



While foreign language skills were envied, some responses to the next question also indicated negative attitudes towards people speaking a language other than English, as 12% wished “they would just speak my language” upon hearing someone speak a foreign language (see Chart 25 below).

*Chart 25. When I hear someone speaking a foreign language, I wish they would just speak my language*



A strict interpretation would view this response as a sign of linguistic imperialism, the view that English is better than other languages and all foreigners should speak English. On the other hand, these informants may want foreigners to speak their language due to the frustration that arises when one does not understand what others are talking about or is excluded from a conversation. It is human to wish that people speak one’s own language in order to better comprehend them.

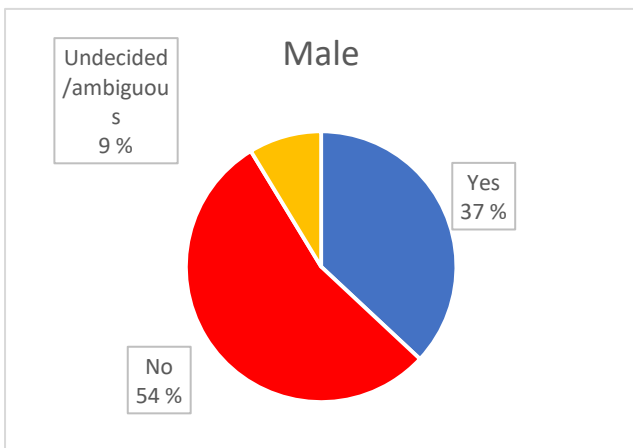
## 5.4. Open-ended questions

Finally, this subsection will offer an analysis of the responses to the four open-ended questions, which were not introduced to the participants until the end of the questionnaire. While this part of the questionnaire was optional, nearly every one of the informants answered the questions with attention. These answers may provide the richest part of the study as they potentially provide qualitative insight on the reasons *why* the participants' language attitudes are positive or negative. The charts in this section will display the results in percentages for each gender, as the number of participants varied from question to question. Individual answers will also be introduced in order to provide more detailed information on the participants' views.

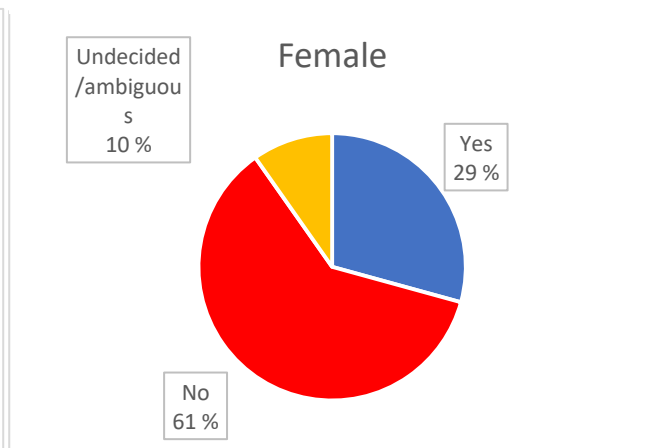
### 5.4.1. Necessity of learning a foreign language

Although the open-ended questions were optional, almost all of the participants (87/90) replied to the first question, "As concerns your studies and future career, would it be necessary to know more than one language?". The percentages of positive, negative, and undecided or ambiguous responses from male and female informants are showcased below (Charts 26 and 27).

*Chart 26. Necessity of learning a foreign language (male answers)*



*Chart 27. Necessity of learning a foreign language (female answers)*



Male informants were apparently more positive about the fact that a foreign language would be *necessary* for their studies and career (37% of men vs. 29% of women). In total, a third (33%) of all participants answered affirmatively that an additional language would be necessary in these contexts, while over a half (58%) argued the opposite. Intriguingly, women were more likely to disagree than men (61% vs 54%).. However, many of the ‘no’ responses did regard knowledge of a foreign language as *useful* or *beneficial*, even if not necessary:

- (1) It's not necessary, no. It's a great additional skill though, which I would recommend to anyone in my field. M12
- (2) It would not be necessary but it would improve my employability. F28
- (3) Not necessary as English is so widely spoken, but helpful for a future career abroad. F40

In responses (1)-(3), competence in a foreign language was hence seen as an asset in job hunting and working life, but not as a necessity for succeeding in one's studies or career. Similar ideas of language learning being useful but not necessary were repeated in a high number of responses. This was manifested by the use of words such as ‘helpful’, ‘advantageous’, and ‘beneficial’.

Negative responses to this question also included arguments relating to living in an English-speaking country. Notions of somewhat limited career-relevance, such as those mentioned by Taylor and Marsden (2014, cf. section 3.3.2.), were displayed in a number of responses. Consider the following comments from students:

- (4) Not necessary, my plan is to be a teacher in the UK so it's not necessary. M1
- (5) No, domestic British politics doesn't require multiple languages and other nations often speak English fluently alongside their native tongue. M48
- (6) No, as I study and plan to stay in Britain. F57

As can be seen from the above (4-6), many participants did not consider foreign languages essential when working or studying in the UK, even if participant M1 did seem to imply that were he not to become a teacher, a foreign language might be needed. Interestingly, M48 did not regard foreign languages necessary in national politics, nor when interacting with foreign nations who speak fluent

English. Arguments that mentioned ‘staying in Britain’, similarly to F57, proved to be rather popular. A similar stance was present in a number of affirmative answers to the question: various participants argued that knowledge of a foreign language would be necessary for them mainly because they planned to work or study abroad. The different uses and needs of foreign languages within Britain were rarely touched upon.

In addition to moving abroad, responses in support of the necessity of competence in more than one language included multiple reasons, including the following:

- (7) Yes, if you work in a job with people from other countries it would be unfair of me to demand they always speak English. F9
- (8) [...]. The international marketplace knows no boundaries and is only severely limited by the language barrier (in the European context). So it is necessary to understand at least another language to help market yourself successfully in the tight world of job seeking. M47
- (9) Yes, because I’d like to go into politics and learning a language can break down certain barriers between countries and people. [...] M69
- (10) Yes, because to only know one language is a disability in politics which prevents total engagement with (areas of) the international sphere. F77

Arguments for the view that foreign languages are necessary thus included being able to communicate with foreign colleagues (7), competitive advantage in the job-seeking world (8), breaking political barriers (9), as well as enhancing international comprehension (10). It is noteworthy that F9 was concerned of the power-relation implied when speaking only a given language at an international workplace, as she thought it would be ‘unfair’ to demand non-natives to always speak English. The word choice of F77 is also intriguing: she regarded monolingualism as a ‘disability’ in politics, arguing it hinders true understanding of international relations. This idea was also put forward by Peel (2001, cf. Section 2.2.), who affirmed that foreign languages should be recognised as the root for understanding different cultures. Similarly to M69, a number of participants shared the view that foreign language learning would be necessary for building bridges between different peoples.

Furthermore, eight answers were marked as undecided or ambiguous, because they did not clearly argue for or against the necessity of learning foreign languages. Consider the answers below:

- (11) Because the FCO [Foreign and Commonwealth Office] is all about international interactions and thus knowing another language could be very useful but perhaps not necessary. F43
- (12) If I wanted to work in political communications abroad I would need another language. F53
- (13) I'm studying in my home country, so another language wouldn't be necessary, as of yet. In the future I think another language could be vital to opening doors in terms of employability. M90

Again, as can be seen from responses (11-13), informants concede that foreign languages are useful at least in some contexts, but their necessity is debatable ('perhaps not', 'as of yet'). More specifically, F53 seemed to believe that another language would be needed when working in politics abroad but not in Britain. M90 did not apparently view foreign languages as essential when studying in Britain, but possibly as an advantage when looking for work.

In conclusion, a slight majority of participants regarded foreign language learning unnecessary, mostly when studying or working in the UK, but some also considered it needless abroad due to English being a 'dominant language' (F88), and a commonly spoken language both in the work sphere and more generally. However, many informants did argue that today's multilingual workplaces and overall globalisation would require competence in another language than English, and that language learning is needed in order to cross political or interpersonal barriers. The findings from this part of the questionnaire may be summed up with a quote from one of the participants (M48): learning a foreign language for work or studies would be "beneficial but not essential" for the majority.

### 5.4.2. Usefulness of learning a foreign language

When it comes to the second question, on whether it would be *beneficial* to know more than one language (“As concerns your studies and future career, would it be beneficial to know more than one language?”), slightly fewer people answered, 84/90. It may be that the similar wording of the previous question led participants to omit answering this one. The distribution of positive, negative, and undecided or unclear answers according to gender are shown in the charts below.

Chart 28. *Usefulness of learning a foreign language (male answers)*

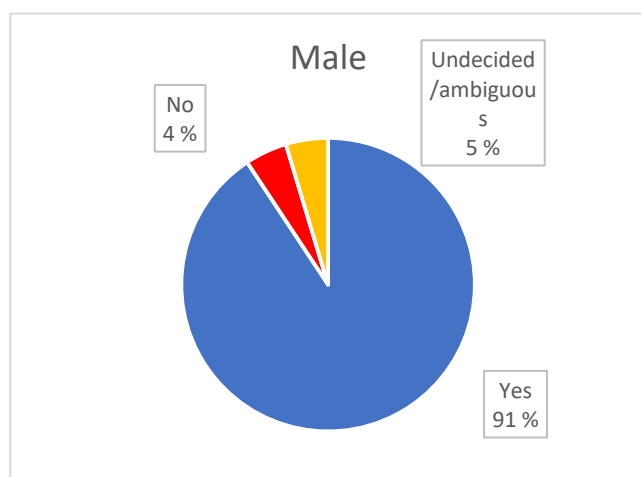
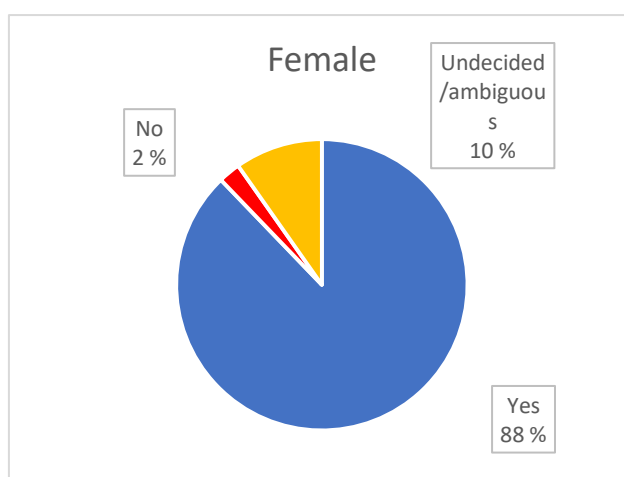


Chart 29. *Usefulness of learning a foreign language (female answers)*



As can be observed from Charts 28 and 29, the vast majority of participants (89%) considered knowledge of a foreign language beneficial as regards their studies or future career. There were only minor differences between male and female informants. The latter were twice more undecided (10% of undecided/ambiguous answers vs. 5% for males), but positive responses were collected from roughly as many men as women (91% vs. 88%).

Arguments in support of the usefulness of a foreign language included, for example, being able to communicate with foreign students and enhancing work prospects both in the UK and abroad. These kinds of arguments can be seen from the responses below:

- (14) Definitely, [...] knowledge of a third or fourth language for research/teaching purposes is vital. M12
- (15) Yes, it would improve my communication with international students. International political employers also prefer applicants to know more than one language. M14
- (16) Yes, prospects of employability would multiply, in England and abroad. F63

The response of M12 (14) was particularly positive, as he said learning a foreign language would be ‘vital’. Moreover, this participant stated he already knew two languages – it might be that language competence plays a role in his positive language attitudes. Responses (15) and (16) are representative of the main responses to this question: many participants described the benefits of multilingualism in terms of better ‘communication’ and ‘employability’. For instance, it was said that foreign language competence may “lessen the possibility of miscommunication” (M74) and help “understand and unravel the relationships between nations” (M78). Various participants seemed to value language learning per se, and more specifically its cognitive benefits, as they wrote foreign language competence indicates ‘intelligence’ (F38, F71), ‘self-improvement’ (M27), and provides a wide range of ‘transferable skills’ (M70).

A person’s employability was thought to improve when knowing foreign languages by many participants, because it would look ‘impressive’ (F67) to employers and give an ‘additional asset’ that many British people arguably lack (F87). Languages were also regarded as useful during one’s studies, when “dealing with people from all over the world” (M15). Language competence was also regarded as “possibly vital at university with so many different cultures” (M90). These comments indicate that some students would like to communicate with foreign peers or staff in their language, hence valuing the role of language in interpersonal relations.

Only a few people were unsure or provided an unclear answer (‘maybe’, ‘don’t know’). One participant simply answered ‘no’ without providing arguments to explain their viewpoint. The two more negative answers were worded as follows:

- (17) No as stated above [in the answer to the necessity of knowing a language]. M8



(18) Not necessary for my future teaching career. F57

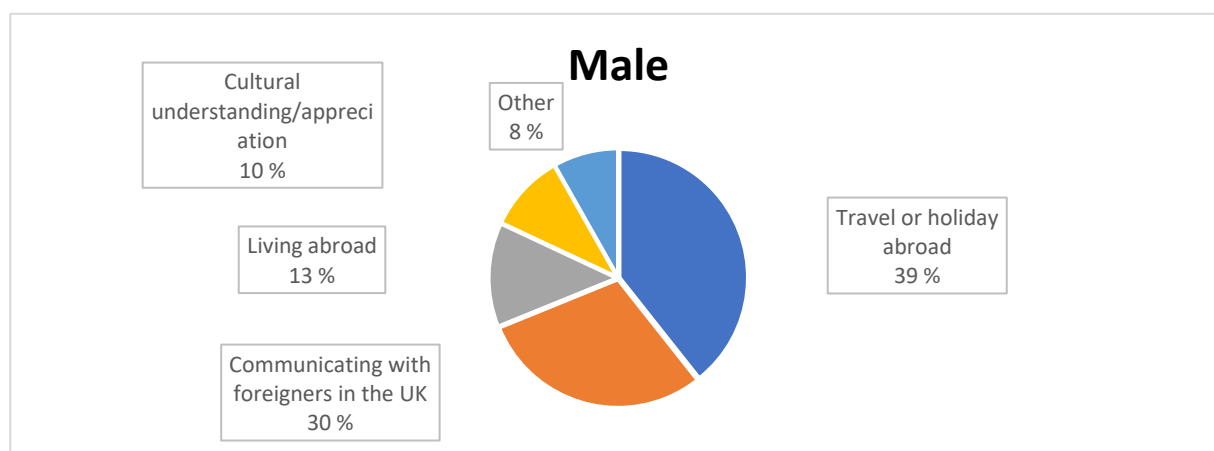
The responses above show that the concepts of usefulness and necessity may easily be confounded and that the notion of career-relevance might have been somewhat restricted in some participants' minds (F57).

All in all, participants largely recognised the advantages of language learning for work or study purposes, be it in order to enhance communication between peers or to increase employment prospects. Language skills were also viewed in a positive light due to cognitive benefits and better comprehension of foreign cultures, which could be of help in their studies and future career.

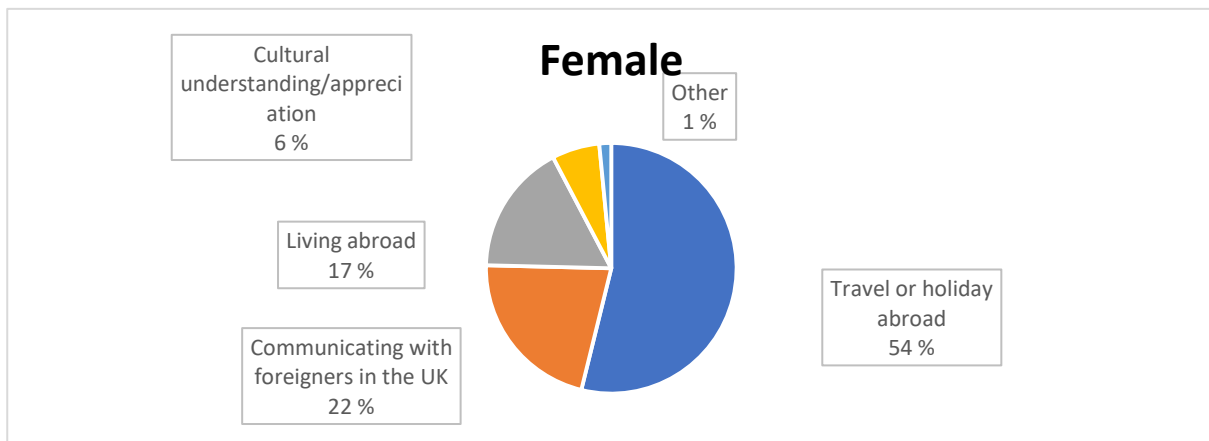
### 5.4.3. Other situations where I could need a foreign language

The third open-ended question was answered by 81 participants. While the previous questions related to the informants' studies and work, the purpose was now to inquire on other situations where the informants assumed foreign languages might be needed. This question was perhaps not clear enough, as some participants still mentioned work or study settings. Some common themes arose in the responses, e.g. travelling abroad and communicating with foreigners in one's own country. The topics mentioned are illustrated in the charts below (Charts 30 and 31).

*Chart 30. Other situations where I could need a foreign language (male answers)*



*Chart 31. Other situations where I could need a foreign language (female answers)*



There were some differences between men and women's answers. Women mentioned travelling (54%) or living abroad (17%) more often than men (39% and 13% respectively). Men, on the other hand, were more likely to mention communication with foreigners within the UK (30% vs 22% of women) and improved cultural understanding and appreciation (10% vs 6% of women).

In total, almost half of the informants mentioned travelling or holidays when it came to thinking of other situations where foreign languages might be useful. A fourth of all participants also mentioned helping or communicating with foreigners in their own country, for example:

- (19) Visiting immigrant populations within the UK. M1
- (20) I could ask my Korean neighbour if she stole my garden gnome. M4
- (21) Communicating with people who do not speak fluent English in any situation. F88

Responses (19-21) showcase the different communication situations mentioned by participants that might involve the use of a foreign language in the UK. Reasons for foreign languages being useful in the UK included interacting with immigrants, travellers, exchange students, and other people whose mother tongue is not English.

Quite a few people (14%) also considered living in a foreign country a good enough reason to learn or know another language, whether it was for studying or working abroad. A participant described the situation as follows:

- (22) [...] A good understanding of [the local language] is crucial for the day to day undertakings of living abroad. M47

Knowing the language of the country where one lives was seen by several students as an effective way to handle everyday life situations but also to better fit with the local people.

In addition, 8% felt that a foreign language would more generally benefit understanding or appreciation of foreign cultures, for instance in order to be able to read literature in the original language. A few people viewed language learning as important in a broader cultural sense, as one could “gain a new perspective on things through the medium of a different language” (M2) or increase their “understanding of other people’s culture” (M86). Other answers than those examined above included “marriage”, “any situation”, and “making friends”, which was mentioned by three participants. Foreign languages were thus perceived as useful in multiple ways, especially for communication between people in a wide range of contexts.

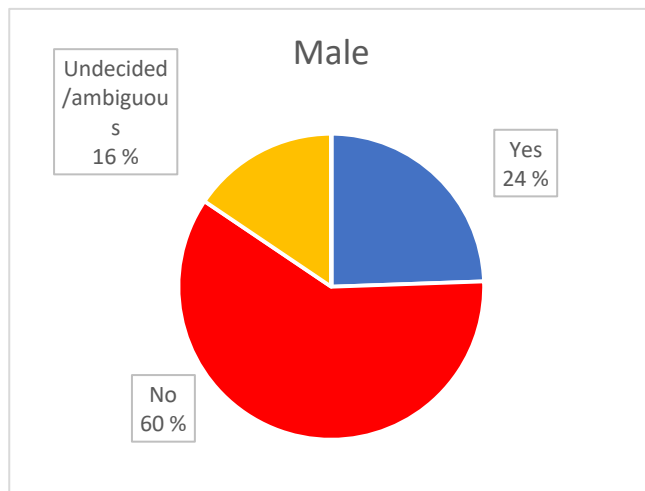
#### **5.4.4. Importance of learning foreign languages after Brexit**

The last question, regarding the effect of Brexit on language learning, seemed to be more interesting to the target group than the previous question, as it collected 87 responses, many of which were fairly long. Questions dealing with the UK’s departure from the EU are probably particularly interesting to British students of politics, as this process directly concerns them as UK citizens and in relation to their subject of study. The question was worded as follows:

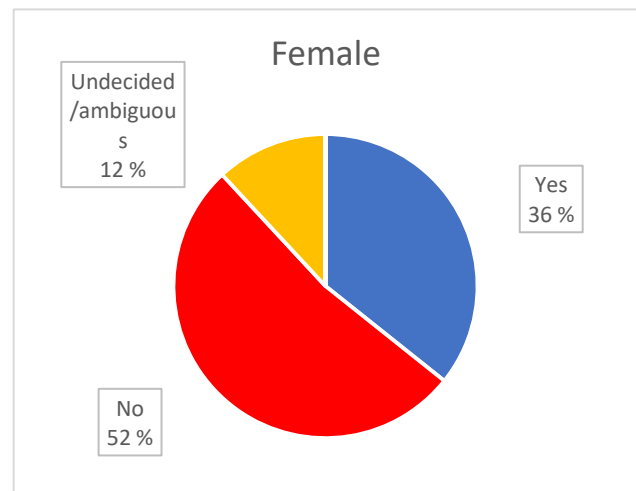
“Following the Brexit vote, it has been argued that English could lose its status as an official EU language. As a consequence, other languages (e.g. French) could become more relevant in international affairs. Do you think it is more important to learn foreign languages now? Why or why not?”

The responses were grouped similarly to the previous open-ended questions, into positive, negative, and undecided or ambiguous answers, as can be seen below (Charts 32 and 33).

*Chart 32. Do you think it is more important to learn foreign languages now (after the Brexit vote)? (male answers)*



*Chart 33. Do you think it is more important to learn foreign languages now (after the Brexit vote)? (female answers)*



Women were slightly more inclined to agreeing with the statement (36% of women vs. 24% of men), while men were more opposed to the idea of foreign languages being more important now (60% vs. 52% of women). All in all, a slight majority of participants (58%) did not believe that learning foreign languages would be more important after the Brexit vote outcome. This was mainly due to the participants thinking foreign languages have ‘always’ been useful, and that their importance would remain the same:

- (23) No, I think it has always been important to learn foreign languages despite Brexit or not [...] F43
- (24) I don’t think the Brexit vote should impact whether or not a person shows an interest in learning a language. For example, they should study French to broaden their horizons, and develop as a person. M90

Responses (23-24) indicate that foreign language learning is viewed in a positive light. Students also underlined that politics should not have an impact on the importance of foreign languages, as language learning is beneficial regardless of political events, for example as ‘self-development’.

Some students also referred to Britain’s colonial history and the international role of English, arguing that this strong status is stable and not likely to change:

- (25) No, as English alongside Mandarin are the languages of trade and commerce as a result of their history and geopolitical influence. M8
- (26) I do not think that Brexit will stop the importance of English. You can't just rewrite history. F17
- (27) No, English will always remain a commonly spoken language. F21

The opinions above (25-27) may be seen to contain somewhat protective, even patriotic ideas, given that the role of English is described as unwavering due to Britain's former imperial status. It was also thought that English would not lose influence because it has been an international language "for so long" (M23). Arguments to support these views were often omitted, maybe because the 'dominance' of the English language was regarded as self-evident.

Others argued that the prominence of English will not shift due to the influential status of other Anglophone countries. Informants referred to the leading role of the United States or to English still being an official language in EU countries Ireland and Malta:

- (28) [...] Ireland is still an EU member state and because of the United States, English is still arguably the primary language for international affairs. M1
- (29) The US is still the dominant actor [...]. Where Britain may lose ties with its fellow Europeans, English will remain the go-to universal language around the world. M2
- (30) No, because English is still the official language of Malta and Ireland, two EU nations, so to remove it would be petty at best. And aside from the EU, the US and its influence will always secure a certain level of importance for the English language (though different). M65

The word choice of M65, "petty at best" may be seen as an example of protective attitudes towards English. A number of participants seemed strongly opposed to the idea proposed in the question. An opposition between 'us' (the British) and 'others' (the European Union) could be read between the lines, when some participants criticised the EU for using "spiteful rhetoric" (M48) or "downgrading the English language" (M74). The practicality of foreign language learning was not always pondered upon in the answers that took a defensive stance:

- (31) I think that is an argument used to cultivate fear. English will remain the global lingua franca, therefore will also remain an official EU language because it has been embedded for so long. [...] F20

- (32) [...] Any attempt to change to French would be counter-productive for Europe as so many schools teach English so well. If they did it would be out of spite. M73

A number of British students thus considered that the removal of English from the EU's official languages would be scary, stupid, vindictive, or impossible. The participants did not always respond to the actual question, on whether language learning would become more relevant if this happened.

However, there were also a large number of affirmative responses to the question. Most of these contained the opinion that language learning is indeed more important now because of globalisation, in order to communicate across nations, and to avoid isolation after Brexit:

- (33) [Foreign language learning is more important now] so that Britain does not become an isolationist country and [...] to help quash the xenophobic rhetoric which has emerged in the light of Brexit. F31
- (34) [...] it is clear that any rapid decline in influence compromises the ability to rely on a cultural comfort zone when abroad, so yes. M44
- (35) Yes, Britain still thinks it is the colonial power it once was, now more than ever its political standing holds little sway in global matters. People need to realise this as leaving the EU has further diminished a decreasing political clout of the UK. M70

As may be observed from the above (33-35), even in some of the affirmative responses, there seemed to be slight concern about the possibly shrinking global power of the UK and being excluded from the international stage. Many participants were seemingly worried about the potential 'decline' in English influence and advocated for the need to learn foreign languages. Some students criticised the UK's foreign language and culture teaching at present, hoping that the situation would be enhanced following Brexit:

- (36) Yes. England is the only country that completely falters in teaching us languages or more broadly the significance of other cultures. [...] our language education is severely limited so we project a quite arrogant international image. M4
- (37) [...] Hopefully [Brexit] might at least make the British education system better at teaching foreign languages from a young age. F83

As seen from responses (36) and (37), some students were seemingly unhappy with the current state of language teaching in the UK. In particular, M4 was concerned about the lack of cultural and linguistic appreciation and the negative image that monolingualism arguably brings about.

Some responses did not clearly state whether language learning would become more important or not in the informant's opinion:

- (38) Possibly, but this is an exaggeration of what will happen following Brexit. Other languages may become more useful, but the utility of English in Europe will not dwindle. M12
- (39) English is a well-established international language. People outside Britain who speak fluent English are not going to suddenly stop speaking English. Children being educated now will continue to be taught in English in schools as despite leaving the EU, the UK still has a good international reputation. F45

While not taking a clear stance, the comments above (38-39) shared many participants' ideas, as they underlined that the prominent role of English worldwide is deep-rooted and is unlikely to be shaken by Brexit. Furthermore, F45 pointed out that the UK still has good international relations despite exiting the European Union.

To summarise the main findings from this question, most students did not believe learning foreign languages would become more important as a result of the Brexit vote outcome. This was mainly due to two reasons: participants either referred to the global status of English and its unlikelihood to shift, or they argued foreign languages have always been important and Brexit would not significantly increase the need to learn them. Many informants did not answer the question directly but focused on defending the importance of the English language. Those who did believe language learning would become more relevant emphasised the role of foreign languages in international communication, the growth of multilingualism due to globalisation, as well as the need to avoid isolation following Britain's departure from the EU.

## **6. Discussion**

The previous section concentrated on presenting the results of the study in a comprehensive manner, but with limited reflection on the most important findings and their overall significance. In this section, the results obtained from the analysis will be discussed in the light of the relevant literature and background information on languages and attitudes from Sections 2 and 3, with focus on the most important results obtained. Firstly, the main findings of the analysis will be interpreted, together with an evaluation of possible flaws in the research process (6.1.), after which some possible implications will be formulated (6.2.).

### **6.1. Interpretation of the results**

I will begin the interpretation by recalling some information of the participants' background. First of all, the informants formed quite a homogeneous group in terms of age (90% were aged 18-22) and gender distribution (roughly half were men and half were women). The variety of languages spoken by the informants also gave a slightly less monolingual image of Brits than stated in the literature. Nevertheless, knowledge of foreign languages was limited to basic competence for most students. Most importantly, a quarter of informants claimed no knowledge whatsoever of a foreign language, and only three people said they were fluent in a foreign language. Hence, as a whole, it may be stated that the participants' linguistic background was not particularly strong.

As may be understood from the Analysis (Section 5), the amount of data collected was considerable, which is why I will proceed to summarise the main findings from each section of the questionnaire in the order they appeared.

When it comes to attitudes to individual languages provided by the Kashkin-type task, results were partly in line with previous studies conducted on upper secondary school students in Finland. As in Kansikas (2002) and Ruokolainen (2012), Spanish was the language that most



British participants wanted to learn. As one of the most widely-spoken languages worldwide and a popular language in different media, this is hardly a surprise. Romance languages (Italian, French, Spanish) as well as English were generally considered the most beautiful, the richest, and the easiest languages. One may only wonder whether these positive attitudes are a reflection of attitudes to speakers of these languages, to the related culture, or to characteristics of the language. For instance, French may be valued positively either because of a pleasing intonation, because of positive views on the French people, or because of aesthetically pleasing cultural associations, such as *haute couture* and sensuality.

German and Russian received the most negative connotations, since they were regarded as the ugliest and the most serious languages, which also correlates with Russian and Finnish studies (Kashkin, 2001; Kansikas 2002). These negative associations may well relate to historical, military, and political reasons. In addition, German was deemed the funniest language, contrary to previous studies in Finland and Russia (Kashkin 2001; Kansikas 2002; Ruokolainen 2012). This suggests that humour and stereotypes, and hence attitudes linked to a particular language vary from country to country. The most difficult language was considered to be Chinese Mandarin, and the other difficult languages stated shared a common characteristic: a different writing system from English. The poorest language was seemingly a challenging one to define, as responses were rather diverse. Intriguingly, English was largely seen as the poorest language, despite it being the richest language for half of the participants. This shows that some Brits are quite critical of their own native language. Familiarity may make a language less appealing, which was also seen in the section on “The language I would like to learn”: the most common second language in the UK, French, was barely mentioned. Worth pointing out is also the participants’ extensive knowledge of specific languages (e.g. click languages) and widespread interest in learning foreign languages, both those ‘languages for the future’ listed by the British Council (2017) and rarer ones.

All in all, answers to the sentence-completion assignment were more varied than those in Kashkin's (2001) and Kansikas' (2002) studies, which may be due to the age and educational level of the participants: university students probably have more life experience and are familiar with a greater number of languages than upper secondary students. Furthermore, as the students answered the questionnaire voluntarily, this might have attracted those who regarded their knowledge of languages sufficient enough to partake.

As for the attitudinal and motivational statements, the small handful of clearly negative responses mostly came from male participants (e.g. "Most other languages are not useful"). However, men generally were slightly more assertive in their answers, displaying both negative and positive attitudes strongly, whereas women tended to choose 'somewhat agree' or 'somewhat disagree' more often. No broad generalisation can be made of gender differences, as both men and women depicted positive and negative attitudes in rather similar ratios, with internal variation from question to question. English as a lingua franca was considered a useful tool by virtually all of the participants. Interestingly, the possible threat imposed by its status on other languages was also acknowledged by many (38%). Foreign languages were considered useful by the majority, both in terms of employability abroad and in the UK, although slightly less in the UK. Languages were also regarded as an efficient means to learn about foreign cultures.

Another result worth underlining from the statement task was the high variability of language learning experiences: a significant minority, 27%, had little or no positive experiences of learning a foreign language, while 22% were undecided on the matter. Only 16% of participants totally agreed with the statement "I have positive experiences of learning a foreign language", a fact that may influence their view of the necessity of foreign languages. One cannot but wonder whether the negative experiences are due to teaching methods or the participants' own lack of motivation. This is an issue to be considered in future studies.

I will now move on to what I consider the most fruitful part of the study – the responses to the open-ended questions. As stated in Section 4.1., it was predicted that politics students would understand that languages could play a significant role in their future careers. This hypothesis was largely verified, as the overwhelming majority answered positively to questions on the usefulness of learning a foreign language for work and study purposes, both in the above-mentioned questionnaire items and the open-ended questions (cf. Sections 5.3.2 and 5.4.2.). By and large, responses concerning multilingualism proved to be rather positive. Many informants mentioned globalisation and international workplaces as factors that would call for competence in another language than English. Language skills were also viewed as valuable for communication purposes at university. In more general terms, language competence was considered to strengthen political and interpersonal ties. Furthermore, the participants mentioned cognitive benefits linked to language learning, such as ‘self-improvement’ and ‘intelligence’.

Nonetheless, a major finding was, that while foreign language skills are valued, they are not considered necessary. As concerns the students’ studies and future career, languages were seen as *beneficial* by the overwhelming majority (90%), but *necessary* by only a third. English was seen as a ‘dominant language’, a language spoken worldwide, including in most workplaces, while other languages were mostly viewed as an ‘additional skill’. Attitudes and beliefs pointed out by Taylor and Marsden (2014) were also partly present in this study. For example, a handful of participants displayed simplistic notions of career-relevance: they regarded foreign languages as important mainly when working or studying abroad, underestimating the utility of language skills within the UK. Some participants also assessed other languages as unnecessary because of the view that “English is spoken by most people”, as could be expected based on earlier findings (Taylor and Marsden 2014; Busse and Walter 2013; Handley 2011).

As concerns other contexts, outside work and studies, where participants thought they might need a foreign language, the most common responses were the following: travelling,

communicating with foreigners (e.g. immigrants) in the UK, living abroad, and cultural enrichment. Languages were hence regarded as useful in several situations, even if they were not seen as indispensable for work and study.

The final open question, concerning the effect of Brexit on language learning seemed to provoke somewhat protective, if not nationalistic, feelings among a number of participants. The question on the potentially changing role of English might have raised strong feelings because of its close link to the participants' national identity. Most students did not consider learning foreign languages more important following the Brexit referendum outcome. Participants either motivated this stance with the international status of English, which they argued is 'well established' and stable, or alternatively stated that foreign languages have 'always' been important, and Brexit will not significantly change the matter. Those informants who did believe language learning would become more relevant due to Brexit stressed the importance of foreign languages in international communication, the effects of globalisation, as well as a need to avoid isolation at a global level.

Finally, some possible downfalls in the conduction of the study must be raised. As mentioned previously (4.2.2), the questionnaire was sent to 14 different English universities, but responses were received from only six of them. The questionnaire stayed available online during the whole year, so the lack of responses could not be explained in terms of too strict a time limit. The relative scarceness of the data collected leads a researcher to wonder whether the topic of the study was judged uninteresting, irrelevant to politics students, or too provocative. It might also be that students felt lack of engagement because the questionnaire was sent online and from a foreign country. Because participation in the study was completely voluntary, it may be that students who were not interested in languages overlooked the survey. This is a factor that might have affected the study and made the results more positive.

One of the main validity issues in this study was the fact stated in Section 5.1.: while the participants were native English speakers, it is not certain that all participants were British, since

English is spoken as a native language in several countries around the world. This issue could have been dealt with by asking the participants' nationality or country of origin in the background section. Nonetheless, being 'British' is still a relative concept: one may have British nationality while having spent most of their life abroad. Therefore, I resolved this issue by defining 'British' as 'studying in Britain and being immersed in British culture'.

As regards the construction of the questionnaire, it must be acknowledged that some aspects could have been improved. The questionnaire consisted of tasks that aimed to discover the participants' feelings and beliefs related to languages. In hindsight, behavioural questions could have been covered as well, as a person's readiness for action is one of the three dimensions of attitudes in the mentalist perspective (see Section 2.2.). Yet, one could argue that behaviour is difficult to evaluate based on a questionnaire, and examination of this attitudinal aspect would have called for a different methodology.

## **6.2. Implications**

In a globalised world, a lingua franca such as English is needed to facilitate communication. Nonetheless, multilingualism has also become an imperative. Various countries have begun to realise that English is not enough, including the UK. Attempts to enhance a people's linguistic skills should take into account the affecting psychological factors, including attitudes, which may be regarded as major catalysts in language learning. There is a pressing need for more research on language attitudes.

The results of the present study both correlate with and differ from previous, similar studies. For instance, Taylor and Marsden's (2014, 902) claim that boys have more negative attitudes to language learning than girls could not be demonstrated in the present study. For example, the politics students who agreed with the claim "Most other languages are not useful" were mostly men, yet a larger number of men than women agreed that learning a foreign language would be necessary

for work and studies. Based on rating scales and sentence-completion items only, the results would have been more biased, which is a good reminder for future questionnaire-based studies to include tasks where participants get a chance to elaborate on their thoughts. It must be pointed out that these differing results as to the effect of gender on attitudes might be due to the informants' age. In Taylor and Marsden's (2014) study, the target group were aged 13-14, while the participants in the present study were all 18 years old or above. Thus, another suggestion for future research would be to compare different age groups and their attitudes to language.

Because the number of informants in this study was relatively low, the results cannot be over-generalised. Nonetheless, the present study implies that Brits' foreign language skills are fairly low, while their necessity is not understood. It must hence be investigated whether poor language competence affects language attitudes or vice versa. Further research on attitudes towards different languages and language learning would be needed, particularly the attitudes of higher-education students and those acting in the political arena in the UK and elsewhere. The present study could also be repeated in a few years, when those affected by the educational reforms in the UK have entered university.

Another idea for prospective research would be to have a closer look at language *learning* attitudes. It could be useful to direct attention to factors that affect foreign language learning attitudes positively, for example by interviewing successful multilinguals or studying teaching practices and their effect on language learning motivation and attitudes.

While this study focused on British students' attitudes to languages and consequently discarded responses from non-native English-speakers, it could also be interesting for future research to make more comparisons between the language attitudes of native as opposed to non-native speakers of English.

Lastly, because there were no drastic differences between male and female participants, it may be more fruitful to take other background factors into account in the analysis of language

attitudes. For example, it has been suggested in various previous studies that socio-economic background may have a major influence on attitudes.

## 7. Conclusion

The present study aimed at examining attitudes to different languages and multilingualism in England. To be more precise, a questionnaire was used to investigate on British politics students' language attitudes and to explore possible correlations between gender and attitudes. The responses to the questionnaire suggest that language attitudes are prevalently positive among British politics students. Overall, the findings mostly supported the hypothesis that politics students would understand the importance of language skills because of their study subject. British students regarded foreign language learning as beneficial for a multitude of purposes, including work, studies, travelling, communicating with people abroad and within the UK, and cultural appreciation.

As concerns gender and attitudes, no clear correlation between the two could be discovered in the present study. There were some minor differences between men and women as concerns individual questionnaire items, but they were not substantial enough to make any generalisations. In addition, there was internal variation in the answers of both genders to the questionnaire. For example, female participants' responses reflected more positive attitudes to languages in the statements section but slightly more negative ones in the open-ended questions as compared to men.

The most positively evaluated specific languages (e.g. the most beautiful, the richest) resulted to be Romance languages Italian, Spanish, and French, and the informants' mother tongue English. Some more negatively assessed languages included Russian and German, which were considered both the ugliest and the most serious languages. However, German was also considered the funniest, and English the poorest language. Mandarin Chinese was viewed as the most difficult language, while English and Spanish were deemed the easiest.

Furthermore, the target group displayed a widespread interest in foreign language learning and a belief in the usefulness of multilingualism. The university students who formed the target group tended to value both foreign languages and their speakers, as most participants seemed to positively envy multilinguals. A number of participants asserted that language learning is increasingly important in today's globalised world, as there is a need to cross language barriers and communicate with people of different cultures.

Simultaneously, language learning is not always set at the top of priorities. One of the main findings was that foreign languages were seen as a nice supplement rather than a necessity, as 'beneficial but not essential'. This finding relates to previous studies contending that the globally prominent role of the English language may hinder language attitudes. Furthermore, many people firmly argued that English could not lose its importance in international contexts, regardless of Brexit. The spread of English was considered complete and unwavering, based on arguments such as "you can't just rewrite history". In many cases, arguments were lacking for the view that "English will always be important" – the international status of English was probably considered self-evident. More insights into this question could possibly be discovered in studies of a more qualitative nature, for instance by conducting interviews or analysing lengthier reflective texts.

This study succeeded in revealing British politics students' attitudes concerning different languages, language learning, and multilingualism. Even if the target group was limited, the amount of data collected was considerable, especially as open-ended questions were answered attentively by the vast majority. The beliefs and feelings regarding specific languages and multilingualism as a whole were more varied than could be expected based on previous studies (e.g. Kansikas, 2002; Busse and Walter, 2013; Taylor and Marsden, 2014). While the students partly displayed negative attitudes towards language learning, as some described it as unimportant or unnecessary, most of the participants viewed foreign languages in a positive light. An interesting finding concerning the



informants' native language, English, is the fact that over a third of the participants regarded it as a threat to other languages – a fact that is not necessarily acknowledged by non-natives.

As reiterated at the beginning of this study, the UK has been claimed to perform poorly in foreign languages for many years, and the country has recently started tackling their language competence shortage. Language education reforms, such as the 2014 decision to make foreign languages statutory in England at Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11), are certainly a step towards better foreign language skills. It has also been suggested that there is a need to implement more motivating language teaching methods, as negative attitudes to language learning can be attributed to inadequate pedagogical decisions (Gruber and Tonkyn 2017, 331). Furthermore, it has been stated that foreign language achievement, attitudes, and motivation are all closely intertwined (Gardner 1982, 135; Kalaja 1999, 56). It is thus advisable to pay more attention to attitudes in order to make language teaching and learning more effective.

Lastly, it must be highlighted that the results of the present study are of a tentative nature, due to the relatively limited number of informants. More studies on British university students' language attitudes would be required to draw reliable conclusions on the topic. As implied by the British Council (2017), attitudes to different languages affect international relations – both in the political sense and in individuals' lives. Studies such as the one presented herein are needed, as more insights into language attitudes would be beneficial to a wide range of professionals – linguists, teachers, politicians, and diplomats alike.

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## Appendix: The questionnaire

### Questionnaire on Attitudes towards Different Languages

Dear student,  
Thank you for taking part in my Master's degree thesis concerning language attitudes. Your answers to this questionnaire are vital to the outcome of my study. I will value your honest and detailed answers.  
The questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your responses are totally voluntary and anonymous.  
If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at: [dupont.clotilde.m@student.uta.fi](mailto:dupont.clotilde.m@student.uta.fi).

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#### Background information

Gender \*

☐ male

☐ female

Age \*

Your answer

Mothertongue(s) \*

Your answer

Other languages and level of proficiency  
(basic/intermediate/fluent) \*

Your answer

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### Your opinion on different languages

Fill in with the language that, in your opinion, best suits the description.

The most beautiful language is \*

Your answer

The ugliest language is \*

Your answer

The most difficult language is \*

Your answer

The easiest language is \*

Your answer

The richest language is \*

Your answer

The poorest language is \*

Your answer

The funniest language is \*

Your answer

The most serious language is \*

Your answer

I would like to learn the following language: \*

Your answer

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## Attitudes part 1/2

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree 5= strongly agree), indicate your agreement to the following statements.

English is a useful tool for international communication. \*

[illegible]

The spread of English is a threat to other languages. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

Most other languages are not useful. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

Foreigners should aim to speak English with a British (or other native speaker) accent. \*

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ strongly agree

Learning a foreign language is useless, because English is spoken by most people. \*

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ strongly agree

Learning a foreign language would improve my employability in the UK. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree



Learning a foreign language would improve my employability abroad. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

Learning a foreign language would help me learn about other cultures. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

When I hear someone speaking a foreign language, I wish I could speak it like them. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

When I hear someone speaking a foreign language, I wish they would just speak my language. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I have positive experiences of learning a foreign language. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

When pursuing a political career, it is useful to know more than one language. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

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**Attitudes part 2/2**

Please give honest and detailed answers.

As concerns your current university studies and your future career, would it be necessary to know more than one language? Why/why not?

Your answer

As concerns your current university studies and your future career, would it be beneficial to know more than one language? Why/why not?

Your answer

In what other situation(s) could you need a foreign language?

Your answer

Following the Brexit vote, it has been argued that English could lose its status as an official EU language. As a consequence, other languages (e.g. French) could become more relevant in international affairs. Do you think it is more important to learn foreign languages now? Why or why not?

Your answer

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**Thank you for your answers!**

The second part of my study consists of a short Skype interview. Would you be interested in taking part in it? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

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Please write down your e-mail address (used for interview contact only):

Your answer

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